The Lockerbie Book of Riley Verse

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THE LOCKERBIE BOOK

The Lockerbie Book

Containing Poems Not in Dialect

By

James Whitcomb Riley

Collected and Arranged by

Hewitt Hanson Howland

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TO

JUDGE E. B. MARTINDALE

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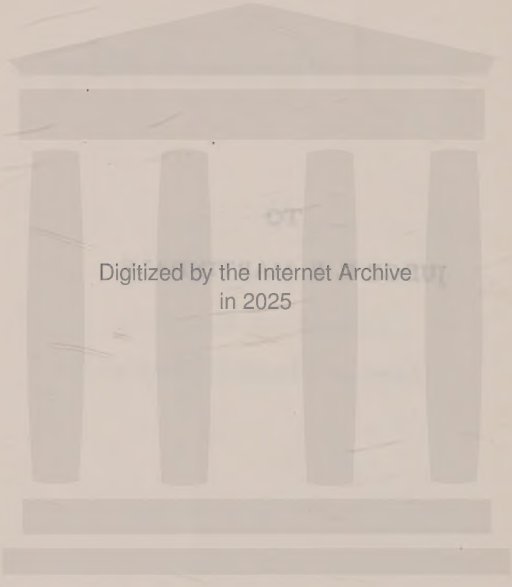
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INTRODUCTION

It is something of a literary presumption to introduce to any one that can read, a volume that bears on its title page the name of James Whitcomb Riley. And yet because of its departure from the naturally expected, this collection seems to make an introduction not only pertinent but courteous as well.

When we were all some years younger than we are now, "Benj. F. Johnson of Boone" dipped his rosy muse in the melodious waters of The Old Swimmin'-Hole and brought her forth wearing on her shining forehead the homely but imperishable sign of dialect.

The century that was then old has gone to its final reckoning, and ten full years have been recorded against its young successor. During this time it has been given to "Benj. F. Johnson" to write much. In the fourteen volumes that now represent his collected verse, almost every poetic form finds a place, and normal English, in distinction from dialect, holds an equal authority. Yet if you say "Riley" to the man in the street he will reply: "When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the shock." The poet, I am sure, has no grievance with this answer; nor is there quarrel anywhere with the fixed association of Riley's name

with his homelier form of verse. Such an alliance is as worthy as it is inevitable. His destinies are garlanded with old fashioned roses and time will judge him and reward him accordingly.

As a consequence, however, his normal English verse is not, perhaps, fully recognized either for its extent or for its quality. And so in this belief, as well as in answer to an ever-continuing demand, these poems have been brought together and the volume comprising them named for the little street in which their author has long lived and worked.

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H. H. H.

THE LOCKERBIE BOOK

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AFTERWHILES

I *Lockerbie Street*

SUCH a dear little street it is, nestled away
From the noise of the city and heat of the day,
In cool shady coverts of whispering trees,
With their leaves lifted up to shake hands with the breeze
Which in all its wide wanderings never may meet
With a resting-place fairer than Lockerbie street!

There is such a relief, from the clangor and din
Of the heart of the town, to go loitering in
Through the dim, narrow walks, with the sheltering shade
Of the trees waving over the long promenade,
And littering lightly the ways of our feet
With the gold of the sunshine of Lockerbie street.

And the nights that come down the dark pathways of dusk,
With the stars in their tresses, and odors of musk
In their moon-woven raiments, bespangled with dews,
And looped up with lilies for lovers to use
In the songs that they sing to the tinkle and beat
Of their sweet serenadings through Lockerbie street.

O my Lockerbie street! You are fair to be seen—
Be it noon of the day, or the rare and serene
Afternoon of the night—you are one to my heart,
And I love you above all the phrases of art,
For no language could frame and no lips could repeat
My rhyme-haunted raptures of Lockerbie street.

2 *A Discouraging Model*

JUST the airiest, fairiest slip of a thing,
With a Gainsborough hat, like a butterfly's wing,
Tilted up at one side with the jauntiest air,
And a knot of red roses sown in under there
Where the shadows are lost in her hair.

Then a cameo face, carven in on a ground
Of that shadowy hair where the roses are wound;
And the gleam of a smile, O as fair and as faint
And as sweet as the masters of old used to paint
Round the lips of their favorite saint!

And that lace at her throat—and the fluttering hands
Snowing there, with a grace that no art understands,
The flakes of their touches—first fluttering at
The bow—then the roses—the hair—and then that
Little tilt of the Gainsborough hat.

Ah, what artist on earth with a model like this,
Holding not on his palette the tint of a kiss,
Nor a pigment to hint of the hue of her hair
Nor the gold of her smile—O what artist could dare
To expect a result half so fair?

3 *Away*

I CANNOT say, and I will not say
That he is dead.—He is just away!

With a cheery smile, and a wave of the hand,
He has wandered into an unknown land,

And left us dreaming how very fair
It needs must be, since he lingers there.

And you—O you, who the wildest yearn
For the old-time step and the glad return,—

Think of him faring on, as dear
In the love of There as the love of Here;

And loyal still, as he gave the blows
Of his warrior-strength to his country's foes.—

Mild and gentle, as he was brave,—
When the sweetest love of his life he gave

To simple things:—Where the violets grew
Blue as the eyes they were likened to,

The touches of his hands have strayed
As reverently as his lips have prayed:

When the little brown thrush that harshly chirred
Was dear to him as the mocking-bird;

And he pitied as much as a man in pain
A writhing honey-bee wet with rain.—

Think of him still as the same, I say:
He is not dead—he is just away!

4 *A Life-Lesson*

THERE! little girl; don't cry!
They have broken your doll, I know;
And your tea-set blue,
And your play-house, too,
Are things of the long ago;
But childish troubles will soon pass by.—
There! little girl; don't cry!

There! little girl; don't cry!
They have broken your slate, I know;
And the glad, wild ways
Of your school-girl days
Are things of the long ago;
But life and love will soon come by.—
There! little girl; don't cry!

There! little girl; don't cry!
They have broken your heart, I know;
And the rainbow gleams
Of your youthful dreams
Are things of the long ago;
But Heaven holds all for which you sigh—
There! little girl; don't cry!

5 *Herr Weiser*

HERR WEISER!—Threescore-years-and-ten,—
A hale white rose of his countrymen,
Transplanted here in the Hoosier loam,
And blossomy as his German home—
As blossomy and as pure and sweet
As the cool green glen of his calm retreat,
Far withdrawn from the noisy town
Where trade goes clamoring up and down,
Whose fret and fever, and stress and strife,
May not trouble his tranquil life!

Breath of rest, what a balmy gust!—
Quit of the city's heat and dust,
Jostling down by the winding road,
Through the orchard ways of his quaint abode.—
Tether the horse, as we onward fare
Under the pear-trees trailing there,
And thumping the wooden bridge at night
With lumps of ripeness and lush delight,
Till the stream, as it maunders on till dawn,
Is powdered and pelted and smiled upon.

Herr Weiser, with his wholesome face,
And the gentle blue of his eyes, and grace
Of unassuming honesty,
Be there to welcome you and me!
And what though the toil of the farm be stopped
And the tireless plans of the place be dropped,
While the prayerful master's knees are set
In beds of pansy and mignonette
And lily and aster and columbine,
Offered in love, as yours and mine?—

What, but a blessing of kindly thought,
Sweet as the breath of forget-me-not!—
What, but a spirit of lustrous love
White as the aster he bends above!—
What, but an odorous memory
Of the dear old man, made known to me
In days demanding a help like his,—
As sweet as the life of the lily is—
As sweet as the soul of a babe, bloom-wise
Born of a lily in paradise.

6 *Out to Old Aunt Mary's*

WASN'T it pleasant, O brother mine,
In those old days of the lost sunshine
Of youth—when the Saturday's chores were through,
And the "Sunday's wood" in the kitchen, too,
And we went visiting, "me and you,"
Out to Old Aunt Mary's?—

"Me and you"—And the morning fair,
With the dewdrops twinkling everywhere;
The scent of the cherry-blossoms blown
After us, in the roadway lone,
Our capering shadows onward thrown—
Out to Old Aunt Mary's!

It all comes back so clear to-day!
Though I am as bald as you are gray,—
Out by the barn-lot and down the lane
We patter along in the dust again,
As light as the tips of the drops of the rain,
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

The few last houses of the town;
Then on, up the high creek-bluffs and down;
Past the squat tollgate, with its well-sweep pole;
The bridge, and "The old 'Babtizin'-hole,'"
Loitering, awed, o'er pool and shoal,
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

We cross the pasture, and through the wood,
Where the old gray snag of the poplar stood,
Where the hammering "red-heads" hopped awry,
And the buzzard "raised" in the "clearing"-sky
And lolled and circled, as we went by
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

Or, stayed by the glint of the redbird's wings,
Or the glitter of song that the bluebird sings,
All hushed we feign to strike strange trails,
As the "big braves" do in the Indian tales,
Till again our real quest lags and fails—
Out to old Aunt Mary's.—

And the woodland echoes with yells of mirth
That make old war-whoops of minor worth!
Where such heroes of war as we?—
With bows and arrows of fantasy,
Chasing each other from tree to tree
Out to Old Aunt Mary's!

And then in the dust of the road again;
And the teams we met, and the countrymen;
And the long highway, with sunshine spread
As thick as butter on country bread,
Our cares behind, and our hearts ahead
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.—

For only, now, at the road's next bend
To the right we could make out the gable-end
Of the fine old Huston homestead—not
Half a mile from the sacred spot
Where dwelt our Saint in her simple cot—
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

Why, I see her now in the open door
Where the little gourds grew up the sides and o'er
The clapboard roof!—And her face—ah, me!
Wasn't it good for a boy to see—
And wasn't it good for a boy to be
Out to Old Aunt Mary's?—

The jelly—the jam and the marmalade,
And the cherry- and quince-"preserves" she made!
And the sweet-sour pickles of peach and pear,
With cinnamon in 'em, and all things rare!—
And the more we ate was the more to spare,
Out to Old Aunt Mary's!

Ah! was there, ever, so kind a face
And gentle as hers, or such a grace
Of welcoming, as she cut the cake
Or the juicy pies that she joyed to make
Just for the visiting children's sake—
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

The honey, too, in its amber comb
One only finds in an old farm-home;
And the coffee, fragrant and sweet, and ho!
So hot that we gloried to drink it so,
With spangles of tears in our eyes, you know—
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

And the romps we took, in our glad unrest!—
Was it the lawn that we loved the best,
With its swooping swing in the locust trees,
Or was it the grove, with its leafy breeze,
Or the dim hay-mow, with its fragrancies—
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

Far fields, bottom-lands, creek-banks—all,
We ranged at will.—Where the waterfall
Laughed all day as it slowly poured
Over the dam by the old mill-ford,
While the tail-race writhed, and the mill-wheel roared—
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

But home, with Aunty in nearer call,
That was the best place, after all!—
The talks on the back-porch, in the low
Slanting sun and the evening glow,
With the voice of counsel that touched us so,
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

And then, in the garden—near the side
Where the bee-hives were and the path was wide,—
The apple-house—like a fairy cell—
With the little square door we knew so well,
And the wealth inside but our tongues could tell—
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

And the old spring house, in the cool green gloom
Of the willow trees,—and the cooler room
Where the swinging shelves and the crocks were kept,
Where the cream in a golden languor slept,
While the waters gurgled and laughed and wept—
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

And as many a time have you and I—
Barefoot boys in the days gone by—
Knelt, and in tremulous ecstasies
Dipped our lips into sweets like these,—
Memory now is on her knees
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.—

For, O my brother, so far away,
This is to tell you—she waits *to-day*
To welcome us:—Aunt Mary fell
Asleep this morning, whispering, "Tell
The boys to come" . . . And all is well
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

7

When June is Here

WHEN June is here—what art have we to sing
The whiteness of the lilies 'midst the green
Of noon-tranced lawns? or flash of roses seen
Like redbirds' wings? or earliest ripening
Prince-Harvest apples, where the cloyed bees cling
Round winey juices oozing down between
The peckings of the robin, while we lean
In under-grasses, lost in marvelling;
Or the cool term of morning, and the stir
Of odorous breaths from wood and meadow walks:
The Bob-white's liquid yodel, and the whir
Of sudden flight; and, where the milkmaid talks
Across the bars, on tilted barley-stalks
The dewdrops' glint in webs of gossamer.

8

A Scrawl

I WANT to sing something—but this is all—
I try and I try, but the rhymes are dull
As though they were damp, and the echoes fall
Limp and unlovable.

Words will not say what I yearn to say—
They will not walk as I want them to,
But they stumble and fall in the path of the way
Of my telling my love for you.

Simply take what the scrawl is worth—
Knowing I love you as sun the sod
On the ripening side of the great round earth
That swings in the smile of God.

9

To Santa Claus

MOST tangible of all the gods that be,
O Santa Claus—our own since Infancy!—
As first we scampered to thee—now, as then,
Take us as children to thy heart again.

Be wholly good to us, just as of old:
As a pleased father, let thine arms infold
Us, homed within the haven of thy love,
And all the cheer and wholesomeness thereof.

Thou lone reality, when O so long
Life's unrealities have wrought us wrong:
Ambition hath allured us,—fame likewise,
And all that promised honor in men's eyes.

Throughout the world's evasions, wiles, and shifts,
Thou only bidest stable as thy gifts:—
A grateful king re-ruleth from thy lap,
Crowned with a little tinselled soldier-cap:

A mighty general—a nation's pride—
Thou givest again a rocking-horse to ride,
And wildly glad he groweth as the grim
Old jurist with the drum thou givest him:

The sculptor's chisel, at thy mirth's command,
Is as a whistle in his boyish hand;
The painter's model fadeth utterly,
And there thou standest,—and he painteth thee:—

Most like a winter pippin, sound and fine
And tingling-red that ripe old face of thine,

Set in thy frosty beard of cheek and chin
As midst the snows the thaws of spring set in.

Ho! Santa Claus—our own since Infancy—
Most tangible of all the gods that be!—
As first we scampered to thee—now, as then,
Take us as children to thy heart again.

10 *A Bride*

"O I AM weary!" she sighed, as her billowy
Hair she unloosed in a torrent of gold
That rippled and fell o'er a figure as willowy,
Graceful and fair as a goddess of old:
Over her jewels she flung herself drearily,
Crumpled the laces that snowed on her breast,
Crushed with her fingers the lily that wearily
Clung in her hair like a dove in its nest.
—And naught but her shadowy form in the mirror
To kneel in dumb agony down and weep near her!

"Weary?"—of what? Could we fathom the mystery?—
Lift up the lashes weighed down by her tears
And wash with their dews one white face from her history,
Set like a gem in the red rust of years?
Nothing will rest her—unless he who died of her
Strayed from his grave, and, in place of the groom,
Tipping her face, kneeling there by the side of her,
Drained the old kiss to the dregs of his doom.
—And naught but that shadowy form in the mirror
To kneel in dumb agony down and weep near her!

11 *Dusk*

THE frightened herds of clouds across the sky
Trample the sunshine down, and chase the day
Into the dusky forest-lands of gray
And sombre twilight. Far, and faint, and high,
The wild goose trails his harrow, with a cry
Sad as the wail of some poor castaway
Who sees a vessel drifting far astray
Of his last hope, and lays him down to die.
The children, riotous from school, grow bold
And quarrel with the wind whose angry gust
Plucks off the summer-hat, and flaps the fold
Of many a crimson cloak, and twirls the dust
In spiral shapes grotesque, and dims the gold
Of gleaming tresses with the blur of rust.

12 *Das Krist Kindel*

I HAD fed the fire and stirred it, till the sparkles in delight
Snapped their saucy little fingers at the chill December night;
And in dressing gown and slippers, I had tilted back "my throne"—
The old split-bottomed rocker—and was musing all alone.

I could hear the hungry Winter prowling round the outer door,
And the tread of muffled footsteps on the white piazza floor;

But the sounds came to me only as the murmur of a stream
That mingled with the current of a lazy-flowing dream.

Like a fragrant incense rising, curled the smoke of my cigar,
With the lamplight gleaming through it like a mist-enfolded star;—
And as I gazed, the vapor like a curtain rolled away,
With a sound of bells that tinkled, and the clatter of a sleigh.

And in a vision, painted like a picture in the air,
I saw the elfish figure of a man with frosty hair—
A quaint old man that chuckled with a laugh as he appeared,
And with ruddy cheeks like embers in the ashes of his beard.

He poised himself grotesquely, in an attitude of mirth,
On a damask-covered hassock that was sitting on the hearth;
And at a magic signal of his stubby little thumb,
I saw the fireplace changing to a bright proscenium.

And looking there, I marvelled as I saw a mimic stage
Alive with little actors of a very tender age;
And some so very tiny that they tottered as they walked,
And lisped and purled and gurgled like the brooklets, when they talked.

And their faces were like lilies, and their eyes like purest dew,
And their tresses like the shadows that the shine is woven through;
And they each had little burdens, and a little tale to tell
Of fairy lore, and giants, and delights delectable.

And they mixed and intermingled, weaving melody with joy,
Till the magic circle clustered round a blooming baby-boy;
And they threw aside their treasures in an ecstasy of glee,
And bent, with dazzled faces and with parted lips, to see.

'Twas a wondrous little fellow, with a dainty double-chin,
And chubby cheeks, and dimples for the smiles to blossom in;
And he looked as ripe and rosy, on his bed of straw and reeds,
As a mellow little pippin that had tumbled in the weeds.

And I saw the happy mother, and a group surrounding her
That knelt with costly presents of frankincense and myrrh;
And I thrilled with awe and wonder, as a murmur on the air
Came drifting o'er the hearing in a melody of prayer:—

By the splendor in the heavens, and the hush upon the sea,
And the majesty of silence reigning over Galilee,—
We feel Thy kingly presence, and we humbly bow the knee
And lift our hearts and voices in gratefulness to Thee.

Thy messenger has spoken, and our doubts have fled and gone
As the dark and spectral shadows of the night before the dawn;
And, in the kindly shelter of the light around us drawn,
We would nestle down forever in the breast we lean upon.

You have given us a shepherd—You have given us a guide,
And the light of Heaven grew dimmer when You sent him from Your side,—
But he comes to lead Thy children where the gates will open wide
To welcome his returning when his works are glorified.

By the splendor in the heavens, and the hush upon the sea,
And the majesty of silence reigning over Galilee,—
We feel Thy kingly presence, and we humbly bow the knee
And lift our hearts and voices in gratefulness to Thee.

Then the vision, slowly failing, with the words of the refrain,
Fell swooning in the moonlight through the frosty window-pane;
And I heard the clock proclaiming, like an eager sentinel
Who brings the world good tidings,—"It is Christmas—all is well!"

13 *June*

O QUEENLY month of indolent repose!
I drink thy breath in sips of rare perfume,
As in thy downy lap of clover-bloom
I nestle like a drowsy child and doze
The lazy hours away. The zephyr throws
The shifting shuttle of the Summer's loom
And weaves a damask-work of gleam and gloom
Before thy listless feet. The lily blows
A bugle-call of fragrance o'er the glade;
And, wheeling into ranks, with plume and spear.
Thy harvest-armies gather on parade;
While, faint and far away, yet pure and clear,
A voice calls out of alien lands of shade:—
All hail the Peerless Goddess of the Year!

14 *The South Wind and the Sun*

O THE South Wind and the Sun!
How each loved the other one—
Full of fancy—full of folly—
Full of jollity and fun!
How they romped and ran about,
Like two boys when school is out,
With glowing face, and lisping lip,
Low laugh, and lifted shout!

And the South Wind—he was dressed
With a ribbon round his breast
That floated, flapped and fluttered
In a riotous unrest,

And a drapery of mist
From the shoulder and the wrist
Flowing backward with the motion
Of the waving hand he kissed.

And the Sun had on a crown
Wrought of gilded thistle-down,
And a scarf of velvet vapor,
And a ravelled-rainbow gown;
And his tinsel-tangled hair,
Tossed and lost upon the air,
Was glossier and flossier
Than any anywhere.

And the South Wind's eyes were two
Little dancing drops of dew,
As he puffed his cheeks, and pursed his lips,
And blew and blew and blew!
And the Sun's—like diamond-stone,
Brighter yet than ever known,
As he knit his brows and held his breath,
And shone and shone and shone!

And this pair of merry fays
Wandered through the summer days;
Arm-in-arm they went together
Over heights of morning haze—
Over slanting slopes of lawn
They went on and on and on,
Where the daisies looked like star-tracks
Trailing up and down the dawn.

And where'er they found the top
Of a wheat-stalk droop and lop
They chucked it underneath the chin
And praised the lavish crop,
Till it lifted with the pride
Of the heads it grew beside,
And then the South Wind and the Sun
Went onward satisfied.

Over meadow-lands they tripped,
Where the dandelions dipped
In crimson foam of clover-bloom,
And dripped and dripped and dripped;
And they clinched the bumble-stings,
Gauming honey on their wings,
And bundling them in lily-bells,
With maudlin murmurings.

And the humming-bird, that hung
Like a jewel up among
The tilted honeysuckle-horns,
They mesmerized, and swung
In the palpitating air,
Drowsed with odors strange and rare,
And, with whispered laughter, slipped away
And left him hanging there.

And they braided blades of grass
Where the truant had to pass;
And they wriggled through the rushes
And the reeds of the morass,

Where they danced, in rapture sweet,
O'er the leaves that laid a street
Of undulant mosaic for
The touches of their feet.

By the brook with mossy brink
Where the cattle came to drink,
They trilled and piped and whistled
With the thrush and bobolink,
Till the kine, in listless pause,
Switched their tails in mute applause,
With lifted heads, and dreamy eyes,
And bubble-dripping jaws.

And where the melons grew,
Streaked with yellow, green and blue,
These jolly sprites went wandering
Through spangled paths of dew;
And the melons, here and there,
They made love to, everywhere,
Turning their pink souls to crimson
With caresses fond and fair.

Over orchard walls they went,
Where the fruited boughs were bent
Till they brushed the sward beneath them
Where the shine and shadow blent;
And the great green pear they shook
Till the sallow hue forsook
Its features, and the gleam of gold
Laughed out in every look.

And they stroked the downy cheek
Of the peach, and smoothed it sleek,
And flushed it into splendor;
And, with many an elfish freak,
Gave the russet's rust a wipe—
Prankt the rambo with a stripe,
And the wine-sap blushed its reddest
As they spanked the pippins ripe.

Through the woven ambuscade
That the twining vines had made,
They found the grapes, in clusters,
Drinking up the shine and shade—
Plumpt, like tiny skins of wine,
With a vintage so divine
That the tongue of fancy tingled
With the tang of muscadine.

And the golden-banded bees,
Droning o'er the flowery leas,
They bridled, reined, and rode away
Across the fragrant breeze,
Till in hollow oak and elm
They had groomed and stabled them
In waxen stalls that oozed with dews
Of rose and lily-stem.

Where the dusty highway leads,
High above the wayside weeds,
They sowed the air with butterflies
Like blooming flower-seeds,

Till the dull grasshopper sprung
Half a man's height up, and hung
Tranced in the heat, with whirring wings,
And sung and sung and sung!

And they loitered, hand in hand,
Where the snipe along the sand
Of the river ran to meet them
As the ripple meets the land,
Till the dragon-fly, in light
Gauzy armor, burnished bright,
Came tilting down the waters
In a wild, bewildered flight.

And they heard the killdee's call,
And afar, the waterfall,
But the rustle of a falling leaf
They heard above it all;
And the trailing willow crept
Deeper in the tide that swept
The leafy shallop to the shore,
And wept and wept and wept!

And the fairy vessel veered
From its moorings—tacked and steered
For the centre of the current—
Sailed away and disappeared:
And the burthen that it bore
From the long-enchanted shore—
"Alas! the South Wind and the Sun!"
I murmur evermore.

For the South Wind and the Sun,
Each so loves the other one,
For all his jolly folly
And frivolity and fun,
That our love for them they weigh
As their fickle fancies may,
And when at last we love them most,
They laugh and sail away.

15 *The Ripest Peach*

THE ripest peach is highest on the tree—
And so her love, beyond the reach of me,
Is dearest in my sight. Sweet breezes, bow
Her heart down to me where I worship now!

She looms aloft where every eye may see
The ripest peach is highest on the tree.
Such fruitage as her love I know, alas!
I may not reach here from the orchard grass.

I drink the sunshine showered past her lips
As roses drain the dewdrop as it drips.
The ripest peach is highest on the tree,
And so mine eyes gaze upward eagerly.

Why—why do I not turn away in wrath
And pluck some heart here hanging in my path? –
Love's lower boughs bend with them—but, ah me!
The ripest peach is highest on the tree!

16 *Time*

I

THE ticking—ticking—ticking of the clock!—
That vexed me so last night!—"For though Time keeps
Such drowsy watch," I moaned, "he never sleeps,
But only nods above the world to mock
Its restless occupant, then rudely rock
It as the cradle of a babe that weeps!"
I seemed to see the seconds piled in heaps
Like sand about me; and at every shock
O' the bell, the piled sands were swirled away
As by a desert-storm that swept the earth
Stark as a granary floor, whereon the gray
And mist-bedrizzled moon amidst the dearth
Came crawling, like a sickly child, to lay
Its pale face next mine own and weep for day.

II

Wait for the morning! Ah! we wait indeed
For daylight, we who toss about through stress
Of vacant-armed desires and emptiness
Of all the warm, warm touches that we need,
And the warm kisses upon which we feed
Our famished lips in fancy! May God bless
The starved lips of us with but one caress
Warm as the yearning blood our poor hearts bleed!
. . . A wild prayer!—bite thy pillow, praying so—
Toss this side, and whirl that, and moan for dawn;
Let the clock's seconds dribble out their woe
And Time be drained of sorrow! Long ago
We heard the crowing cock, with answer drawn
As hoarsely sad at throat as sobs. . . . Pray on!

17

Afterwhiles

WHERE are they—the Afterwhiles—
Luring us the lengthening miles
Of our lives? Where is the dawn
With the dew across the lawn
Stroked with eager feet the far
Way the hills and valleys are?
Where the sun that smites the frown
Of the eastward-gazer down?
Where the rifted wreaths of mist
O'er us, tinged with amethyst,
Round the mountain's steep defiles?
Where are all the afterwhiles?

Afterwhile—and we will go
Thither, yon, and to and fro—
From the stifling city streets
To the country's cool retreats—
From the riot to the rest
Where hearts beat the placidest:
Afterwhile, and we will fall
Under breezy trees, and loll
In the shade, with thirsty sight
Drinking deep the blue delight
Of the skies that will beguile
Us as children—afterwhile.

Afterwhile—and one intends
To be gentler to his friends,—
To walk with them, in the hush
Of still evenings, o'er the plush
Of home-leading fields, and stand

Long at parting, hand in hand:
One, in time, will joy to take
New resolves for some one's sake,
And wear then the look that lies
Clear and pure in other eyes—
He will soothe and reconcile
His own conscience—afterwhile.

Afterwhile—we have in view
A far scene to journey to,—
Where the old home is, and where
The old mother waits us there,
Peering, as the time grows late,
Down the old path to the gate.—
How we'll click the latch that locks
In the pinks and hollyhocks,
And leap up the path once more
Where she waits us at the door!—
How we'll greet the dear old smile,
And the warm tears—afterwhile!

Ah, the endless afterwhiles!—
Leagues on leagues, and miles on miles,
In the distance far withdrawn,
Stretching on, and on, and on,
Till the fancy is footsore
And faints in the dust before
The last milestone's granite face,
Hacked with: Here Beginneth Space.
O far glimmering worlds and wings,
Mystic smiles and beckonings,
Lead us through the shadowy aisles,
Out into the afterwhiles.

18 Silence

THOUSANDS of thousands of hushed years ago,
Out on the edge of Chaos, all alone
I stood on peaks of vapor, high upthrown
Above a sea that knew nor ebb nor flow,
Nor any motion won of winds that blow,
Nor any sound of watery wail or moan,
Nor lisp of wave, nor wandering undertone
Of any tide lost in the night below.
So still it was, I mind me, as I laid
My thirsty ear against mine own faint sigh
To drink of that, I sipped it, half afraid
'Twas but the ghost of a dead voice spilled by
The one starved star that tottered through the shade
And came tip-toeing toward me down the sky.

19 Grant

AT REST—AUGUST 8, 1885

Sir Launcelot rode overthwart and endlong in a wide forest, and held no path but as wild adventure led him. . . . And he returned and came again to his horse, and took off his saddle and his bridle, and let him pasture; and unlaced his helm, and ungirdled his sword, and laid him down to sleep upon his shield before the cross.—AGE OF CHIVALRY.

WHAT shall we say of the soldier, Grant,
His sword put by and his great soul free?
How shall we cheer him now or chant
His requiem befittingly?

The fields of his conquest now are seen
  Ranged no more with his armèd men—
But the rank and file of the gold and green
  Of the waving grain is there again.

Though his valiant life is a nation's pride,
  And his death heroic and half divine,
And our grief as great as the world is wide,
  There breaks in speech but a single line:—
We loved him living, revere him dead!—
  A silence then on our lips is laid:
We can say no thing that has not been said,
  Nor pray one prayer that has not been prayed.

But a spirit within us speaks: and lo,
  We lean and listen to wondrous words
That have a sound as of winds that blow,
  And the voice of waters and low of herds;
And we hear, as the song flows on serene,
  The neigh of horses, and then the beat
Of hooves that skurry o'er pastures green,
  And the patter and pad of a boy's bare feet.

A brave lad, wearing a manly brow,
  Knit as with problems of grave dispute,
And a face, like the bloom of the orchard bough,
  Pink and pallid, but resolute;
And flushed it grows as the clover-bloom,
  And fresh it gleams as the morning dew,
As he reins his steed where the quick quails boom
  Up from the grasses he races through.

And ho! as he rides what dreams are his?
And what have the breezes to suggest?—
Do they whisper to him of shells that whiz
O'er fields made ruddy with wrongs redressed?
Does the hawk above him an Eagle float?
Does he thrill and his boyish heart beat high,
Hearing the ribbon about his throat
Flap as a flag as the winds go by?

And does he dream of the Warrior's fame—
This Western boy in his rustic dress?
For, in miniature, this is the man that came
Riding out of the Wilderness!—
The selfsame figure—the knitted brow—
The eyes full steady—the lips full mute—
And the face, like the bloom of the orchard bough,
Pink and pallid, but resolute.

Ay, this is the man, with features grim
And stoical as the Sphinx's own,
That heard the harsh guns calling him,
As musical as the bugle blown,
When the sweet spring heavens were clouded o'er
With a tempest, glowering and wild,
And our country's flag bowed down before
Its bursting wrath as a stricken child.

Thus, ready mounted and booted and spurred,
He loosed his bridle and dashed away!—
Like a roll of drums were his hoof-beats heard,
Like the shriek of the fife his charger's neigh!
And over his shoulder and backward blown,
We heard his voice, and we saw the sod

Reel, as our wild steeds chased his own
As though hurled on by the hand of God!

And still, in fancy, we see him ride
In the blood-red front of a hundred frays,
His face set stolid, but glorified
As a knight's of the old Arthurian days:
And victor ever as courtly, too,
Gently lifting the vanquished foe,
And staying him with a hand as true
As dealt the deadly avenging blow.

So, brighter than all of the cluster of stars
Of the flag enshrouding his form to-day,
His face shines forth from the grime of wars
With a glory that shall not pass away:
He rests at last: he has borne his part
Of salutes and salvos and cheers on cheers—
But O the sobs of his country's heart,
And the driving rain of a nation's tears!

20 *The Sphinx*

I KNOW all about the Sphinx—
I know even what she thinks,
Staring with her stony eyes
Up forever at the skies.

For last night I dreamed that she
Told me all the mystery—
Why for æons mute she sat:—
She was just cut out for that!

21 Sleep

THOU drowsy god, whose blurred eyes, half awink,
Muse on me,—drifting out upon thy dreams,
I lave my soul as in enchanted streams
Where revelling satyrs pipe along the brink,
And, tipsy with the melody they drink,
Uplift their dangling hooves and down the beams
Of sunshine dance like motes. Thy languor seems
An ocean-depth of love wherein I sink
Like some fond Argonaut, right willingly,—
Because of wooing eyes upturned to mine,
And siren-arms that coil their sorcery
About my neck, with kisses so divine,
The heavens reel above me, and the sea
Swallows and licks its wet lips over me.

22 Illileo

ILLILEO, the moonlight seemed lost across the vales—
The stars but strewed the azure as an armor's scattered scales;
The airs of night were quiet as the breath of silken sails,
And all your words were sweeter than the notes of nightingales.

Illileo Legardi, in the garden there alone,
With your figure carved of fervor, as the Psyche carved of stone,
There came to me no murmur of the fountain's undertone
So mystically, musically mellow as your own.

You whispered low, Illileo—so low the leaves were mute,
And the echoes faltered breathless in your voice's vain pursuit;
And there died the distant dalliance of the serenader's lute:
And I held you in my bosom as the husk may hold the fruit.

Illileo, I listened. I believed you. In my bliss,
What were all the worlds above me since I found you thus in this?—
Let them reeling reach to win me—even Heaven I would miss,
Grasping earthward!—I would cling here, though I clung by just a kiss.

And blossoms should grow odorless—and lilies all aghast—
And I said the stars should slacken in their paces through the vast,
Ere yet my loyalty should fail enduring to the last.—
So vowed I. It is written. It is changeless as the past.

Illileo Legardi, in the shade your palace throws
Like a cowl about the singer at your gilded porticos,
A moan goes with the music that may vex the high repose
Of a heart that fades and crumbles as the crimson of a rose.

23 *Ike Walton's Prayer*

I CRAVE, dear Lord,
No boundless hoard
Of gold and gear,
Nor jewels fine,
Nor lands, nor kine,
Nor treasure-heaps of anything.—
Let but a little hut be mine
Where at the hearthstone I may hear
The cricket sing,
And have the shine
Of one glad woman's eyes to make,
For my poor sake,
Our simple home a place divine;—
Just the wee cot—the cricket's chirr—
Love, and the smiling face of her.

I pray not for
Great riches, nor
For vast estates and castle-halls,—
Give me to hear the bare footfalls
Of children o'er
An oaken floor
New-rinsed with sunshine, or bespread
With but the tiny coverlet
And pillow for the baby's head;
And, pray Thou, may
The door stand open and the day
Send ever in a gentle breeze,
With fragrance from the locust trees,

And drowsy moan of doves, and blur
Of robin-chirps, and drone of bees,
With after-hushes of the stir
Of intermingling sounds, and then
The goodwife and the smile of her
Filling the silences again—
The cricket's call
And the wee cot,
Dear Lord of all,
Deny me not!

I pray not that
Men tremble at
My power of place
And lordly sway,—
I only pray for simple grace
To look my neighbor in the face
Full honestly from day to day—
Yield me his horny palm to hold,
And I'll not pray
For gold;—
The tanned face, garlanded with mirth,
It hath the kingliest smile on earth;
The swart brow, diamonded with sweat,
Hath never need of coronet.
And so I reach,
Dear Lord, to Thee,
And do beseech
Thou givest me
The wee cot, and the cricket's chirr,
Love, and the glad sweet face of her!

24 *Her Hair*

THE beauty of her hair bewilders me—
Pouring adown the brow, its cloven tide
Swirling about the ears on either side
And storming round the neck tumultuously:
Or like the lights of old antiquity
Through mullioned windows, in cathedrals wide,
Spilled moltenly o'er figures deified
In chastest marble, nude of drapery.
And so I love it.—Either unconfined;
Or plaited in close braidings manifold;
Or smoothly drawn; or indolently twined
In careless knots whose coilings come unrolled
At any lightest kiss; or by the wind
Whipped out in flossy ravellings of gold.

25 *Laughter Holding Both His Sides*

AY, thou varlet! Laugh away!
All the world's a holiday!
Laugh away, and roar and shout
Till thy hoarse tongue lolleth out!
Bloat thy cheeks, and bulge thine eyes
Unto bursting; pelt thy thighs
With thy swollen palms, and roar
As thou never hast before!
Lustier! wilt thou! peal on peal!
Stiffest? Squat and grind thy heel—
Wrestle with thy loins, and then
Wheeze thee whiles, and whoop again!

26 *Our Kind of a Man*

I

THE kind of a man for you and me!
He faces the world unflinchingly,
And smites, as long as the wrong resists,
With a knuckled faith and force like fists:
He lives the life he is preaching of,
And loves where most is the need of love;
His voice is clear to the deaf man's ears,
And his face sublime through the blind man's tears;
The light shines out where the clouds were dim,
And the widow's prayer goes up for him;
The latch is clicked at the hovel door
And the sick man sees the sun once more,
And out o'er the barren fields he sees
Springing blossoms and waving trees,
Feeling as only the dying may,
That God's own servant has come that way,
Smoothing the path as it still winds on
Through the golden gate where his loved have gone.

II

The kind of a man for me and you!
However little of worth we do
He credits full, and abides in trust
That time will teach us how more is just.
He walks abroad, and he meets all kinds
Of querulous and uneasy minds,
And, sympathizing, he shares the pain
Of the doubts that rack us, heart and brain;

And, knowing this, as we grasp his hand,
We are surely coming to understand!
He looks on sin with pitying eyes—
E'en as the Lord, since Paradise,—
Else, should we read, Though our sins should glow
As scarlet, they shall be white as snow?—
And, feeling still, with a grief half glad,
That the bad are as good as the good are bad,
He strikes straight out for the Right—and he
Is the kind of a man for you and me!

27 *Last Night—and This*

LAST night—how deep the darkness was!
And well I knew its depths, because
I waded it from shore to shore,
Thinking to reach the light no more.

She would not even touch my hand.—
The winds rose and the cedars fanned
The moon out, and the stars fled back
In heaven and hid—and all was black!

But ah! To-night a summons came,
Signed with a tear-drop for a name,—
For as I wondering kissed it, lo,
A line beneath it told me so.

And *now*—the moon hangs over me
A disk of dazzling brilliancy,
And every star-tip stabs my sight
With splintered glitterings of light!

28 *The Lost Kiss*

I PUT by the half-written poem,
While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,
Writes on,—"Had I words to complete it,
Who'd read it, or who'd understand?"
But the little bare feet on the stairway,
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,
And the eerie-low lisp on the silence,
Cry up to me over it all.

So I gather it up—where was broken
The tear-faded thread of my theme,
Telling how, as one night I sat writing,
A fairy broke in on my dream,
A little inquisitive fairy—
My own little girl, with the gold
Of the sun in her hair, and the dewy
Blue eyes of the fairies of old.

'Twas the dear little girl that I scolded—
"For was it a moment like this,"
I said, "when she knew I was busy,
To come romping in for a kiss?—
Come rowdying up from her mother,
And clamoring there at my knee
For 'One 'ittle kiss for my dolly,
And one 'ittle uzzer for me!'"

God, pity the heart that repelled her,
And the cold hand that turned her away,
And take, from the lips that denied her,
This answerless prayer of to-day!

Take, Lord, from my mem'ry forever
That pitiful sob of despair,
And the patter and trip of the little bare feet,
And the one piercing cry on the stair!

I put by the half-written poem,
While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,
Writes on,—"Had I words to complete it,
Who'd read it, or who'd understand?"
But the little bare feet on the stairway,
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,
And the eerie-low lisp on the silence,
Cry up to me over it all.

29 *Dearth*

I HOLD your trembling hand to-night—and yet
I may not know what wealth of bliss is mine,
My heart is such a curious design
Of trust and jealousy! Your eyes are wet—
So must I think they jewel some regret,—
And lo, the loving arms that round me twine
Cling only as the tendrils of a vine
Whose fruit has long been gathered: I forget,
While crimson clusters of your kisses press
Their wine out on my lips, my royal fare
Of rapture, since blind fancy needs must guess
They once poured out their sweetness otherwhere
With fuller flavoring of happiness
Than e'en your broken sobs may now declare.

30

The Beautiful City

THE Beautiful City! Forever
Its rapturous praises resound;
We fain would behold it—but never
A glimpse of its glory is found:
We slacken our lips at the tender
White breasts of our mothers to hear
Of its marvellous beauty and splendor;—
We see—but the gleam of a tear!

Yet never the story may tire us—
First graven in symbols of stone—
Rewritten on scrolls of papyrus
And parchment, and scattered and blown
By the winds of the tongues of all nations,
Like a litter of leaves wildly whirled
Down the rack of a hundred translations,
From the earliest lisp of the world.

We compass the earth and the ocean,
From the Orient's uttermost light,
To where the last ripple in motion
Lips hem of the skirt of the night,—
But the Beautiful City evades us—
No spire of it glints in the sun—
No glad-bannered battlement shades us
When all our long journey is done.

Where lies it? We question and listen;
We lean from the mountain, or mast,
And see but dull earth, or the glisten
Of seas inconceivably vast:

The dust of the one blurs our vision,
The glare of the other our brain,
Nor city nor island Elysian
In all of the land or the main!

We kneel in dim fanes where the thunders
Of organs tumultuous roll,
And the longing heart listens and wonders,
And the eyes look aloft from the soul:
But the chanson grows fainter and fainter,
Swoons wholly away and is dead;
And our eyes only reach where the painter
Has dabbled a saint overhead.

The Beautiful City! O mortal,
Fare hopefully on in thy quest,
Pass down through the green grassy portal
That leads to the Valley of Rest;
There first passed the One who, in pity
Of all thy great yearning, awaits
To point out The Beautiful City,
And loosen the trump at the gates.

31 *Becalmed*

I

WOULD that the winds might only blow
As they blew in the golden long ago!—
Laden with odors of Orient isles
Where ever and ever the sunshine smiles,
And the bright sands blend with the shady trees,
And the lotus blooms in the midst of these.

II

Warm winds won from the midland vales
To where the tress of the Siren trails
O'er the flossy tip of the mountain phlox
And the bare limbs twined in the crested rocks,
High above as the sea-gulls flap
Their lopping wings at the thunder-clap.

III

Ah! that the winds might rise and blow
The great surge up from the port below,
Bloating the sad, lank, silken sails
Of the Argo out with the swift, sweet gales
That blew from Colchis when Jason had
His love's full will and his heart was glad—
When Medea's voice was soft and low.
Ah! that the winds might rise and blow!

32 *From the Headboard of a Grave in Paraguay*

A TROTH, and a grief, and a blessing,
Disguised them and came this way,—
And one was a promise, and one was a doubt.
And one was a rainy day.

And they met betimes with this maiden,—
And the promise it spake and lied,
And the doubt it gibbered and hugged itself,
And the rainy day—she died.

33 *Indiana*

OUR Land—our Home!—the common home indeed
Of soil-born children and adopted ones—
The stately daughters and the stalwart sons
Of Industry:—All greeting and godspeed!
O home to proudly live for, and, if need
Be, proudly die for, with the roar of guns
Blent with our latest prayer.—So died men once. . . .
Lo, Peace! . . As we look on the land THEY freed
Its harvests all in ocean-overflow
Poured round autumnal coasts in billowy gold—
Its corn and wine and balmèd fruits and flow'rs,—
We know the exaltation that they know
Who now, steadfast inheritors, behold
The Land Elysian, marvelling "This is ours!"

34 *Fame*

ONCE, in a dream, I saw a man,
With haggard face and tangled hair,
And eyes that nursed as wild a care
As gaunt Starvation ever can;
And in his hand he held a wand
Whose magic touch gave life and thought
Unto a form his fancy wrought
And robed with coloring so grand,
It seemed the reflex of some child
Of Heaven, fair and undefiled—
A face of purity and love—
To woo him into worlds above:

And as I gazed with dazzled eyes,
  A gleaming smile lit up his lips
  As his bright soul from its eclipse
Went flashing into Paradise.
Then tardy Fame came through the door
And found a picture—nothing more.

And once I saw a man, alone,
  In abject poverty, with hand
Uplifted o'er a block of stone
  That took a shape at his command
And smiled upon him, fair and good—
A perfect work of womanhood,
Save that the eyes might never weep,
Nor weary hands be crossed in sleep,
Nor hair that fell from crown to wrist,
Be brushed away, caressed and kissed.
And as in awe I gazed on her,
  I saw the sculptor's chisel fall—
    I saw him sink, without a moan,
    Sink lifeless at the feet of stone,
And lie there like a worshipper.
  Fame crossed the threshold of the hall,
  And found a statue—that was all.

And once I saw a man who drew
  A gloom about him like a cloak,
And wandered aimlessly. The few
  Who spoke of him at all, but spoke
Disparagingly of a mind
The Fates had faultily designed:

Too indolent for modern times—
  Too fanciful, and full of whims—
For, talking to himself in rhymes,
  And scrawling never-heard-of hymns,
The idle life to which he clung
Was worthless as the songs he sung!
I saw him, in my vision, filled
  With rapture o'er a spray of bloom
  The wind threw in his lonely room;
And of the sweet perfume it spilled
He drank to drunkenness, and flung
His long hair back, and laughed and sung
And clapped his hands as children do
At fairy tales they listen to,
While from his flying quill there dripped
Such music on his manuscript
That he who listens to the words
May close his eyes and dream the birds
Are twittering on every hand
A language he can understand.
He journeyed on through life, unknown,
Without one friend to call his own;
He tired. No kindly hand to press
The cooling touch of tenderness
Upon his burning brow, nor lift
To his parched lips God's freest gift—
No sympathetic sob or sigh
Of trembling lips—no sorrowing eye
Looked out through tears to see him die.
And Fame her greenest laurels brought
To crown a head that heeded not.

And this is Fame! A thing, indeed,
That only comes when least the need:
The wisest minds of every age
The book of life from page to page
Have searched in vain; each lesson conned
Will promise it the page beyond—
Until the last, when dusk of night
Falls over it, and reason's light
Is smothered by that unknown friend
Who signs his *nom de plume,* The End.

35 *When Bessie Died*

"If from your own the dimpled hands had slipped,
And ne'er would nestle in your palm again;
If the white feet into the grave had tripped—"

WHEN Bessie died—
We braided the brown hair, and tied
It just as her own little hands
Had fastened back the silken strands
A thousand times—the crimson bit
Of ribbon woven into it
That she had worn with childish pride—
Smoothed down the dainty bow—and cried—
When Bessie died.

When Bessie died—
We drew the nursery blinds aside,
And, as the morning in the room
Burst like a primrose into bloom,

Her pet canary's cage we hung
Where she might hear him when he sung—
And yet not any note he tried,
Though she lay listening folded-eyed.

When Bessie died—
We writhed in prayer unsatisfied:
We begged of God, and He did smile
In silence on us all the while;
And we did see Him, through our tears,
Enfolding that fair form of hers,
She laughing back against His love
The kisses we had nothing of—
And death to us He still denied,
When Bessie died—
When Bessie died.

36 *The Shower*

THE landscape, like the awed face of a child,
Grew curiously blurred; a hush of death
Fell on the fields, and in the darkened wild
The zephyr held its breath.

No wavering glamour-work of light and shade
Dappled the shivering surface of the brook;
The frightened ripples in their ambuscade
Of willows thrilled and shook.

The sullen day grew darker, and anon
Dim flashes of pent anger lit the sky;

With rumbling wheels of wrath came rolling on
The storm's artillery.

The cloud above put on its blackest frown,
And then, as with a vengeful cry of pain,
The lightning snatched it, ripped and flung it down
In ravelled shreds of rain:

While I, transfigured by some wondrous art,
Bowed with the thirsty lilies to the sod,
My empty soul brimmed over, and my heart
Drenched with the love of God.

37

The Dead Lover

TIME is so long when a man is dead!
Some one sews; and the room is made
Very clean; and the light is shed
Soft through the window-shade.

Yesterday I thought: "I know
Just how the bells will sound, and how
The friends will talk, and the sermon go,
And the hearse-horse bow and bow!"

This is to-day; and I have no thing
To think of—nothing whatever to do
But to hear the throb of the pulse of a wing
That wants to fly back to you.

38 *Art and Love*

HE faced his canvas (as a seer whose ken
Pierces the crust of this existence through)
And smiled beyond on that his genius knew
Ere mated with his being. Conscious then
Of his high theme alone, he smiled again
Straight back upon himself in many a hue
And tint, and light and shade, which slowly grew
Enfeatured of a fair girl's face, as when
First time she smiles for love's sake with no fear.
So wrought he, witless that behind him leant
A woman, with old features, dim and sear,
And glamoured eyes that felt the brimming tear,
And with a voice, like some sad instrument,
That sighing said, "I'm dead there; love me here!"

39 *The King*

THEY rode right out of the morning sun—
A glimmering, glittering cavalcade
Of knights and ladies, and every one
In princely sheen arrayed;
And the king of them all, O he rode ahead,
With a helmet of gold, and a plume of red
That spurted about in the breeze and bled
In the bloom of the everglade.

And they rode high over the dewy lawn,
With brave, glad banners of every hue
That rolled in ripples, as they rode on
In splendor, two and two;

And the tinkling links of the golden reins
Of the steeds they rode rang such refrains
As the castanets in a dream of Spain's
    Intensest gold and blue.

And they rode and rode; and the steeds they neighed
    And pranced, and the sun on their glossy hides
Flickered and lightened and glanced and played
    Like the moon on rippling tides;
And their manes were silken, and thick and strong,
And their tails were flossy, and fetlock-long,
And jostled in time to the teeming throng,
    And their knightly song besides.

Clank of scabbard and jingle of spur,
    And the fluttering sash of the queen went wild
In the wind, and the proud king glanced at her
    As one at a wilful child,—
And as knight and lady away they flew,
And the banners flapped, and the falcon, too,
And the lances flashed and the bugle blew,
    He kissed his hand and smiled.—

And then, like a slanting sunlit shower,
    The pageant glittered across the plain,
And the turf spun back, and the wildweed flower
    Was only a crimson stain.
And a dreamer's eyes they are downward cast,
As he blends these words with the wailing blast:
"It is the King of the Year rides past!"
    And Autumn is here again.

40 *A Voice from the Farm*

IT is my dream to have you here with me,
Out of the heated city's dust and din—
Here where the colts have room to gambol in,
And kine to graze, in clover to the knee.
I want to see your wan face happily
Lit with the wholesome smiles that have not been
In use since the old games you used to win
When we pitched horseshoes: And I want to be
At utter loaf with you in this dim land
Of grove and meadow, while the crickets make
Our own talk tedious, and the bat wields
His bulky flight, as we cease converse and
In a dusk like velvet smoothly take
Our way toward home across the dewy fields.

41 *The Serenade*

THE midnight is not more bewildering
To her drowsed eyes, than, to her ears, the sound
Of dim, sweet singing voices, interwound
With purl of flute and subtle twang of string,
Strained through the lattice, where the roses cling
And, with their fragrance, waft the notes around
Her haunted senses. Thirsting beyond bound
Of her slow-yielding dreams, the lilt and swing
Of the mysterious, delirious tune,
She drains like some strange opiate, with awed eyes
Upraised against her casement, where, aswoon,
The stars fail from her sight, and up the skies
Of alien azure rolls the full round moon
Like some vast bubble blown of summer noon.

42 *Anselmo*

YEARS did I vainly seek the good Lord's grace,—
Prayed, fasted, and did penance dire and dread;
Did kneel, with bleeding knees and rainy face,
And mouth the dust, with ashes on my head;
Yea, still with knotted scourge the flesh I flayed,
Rent fresh the wounds, and moaned and shrieked insanely;
And froth oozed with the pleadings that I made,
And yet I prayed on vainly, vainly, vainly!

A time, from out of swoon I lifted eye,
To find a wretched outcast, gray and grim,
Bathing my brow, with many a pitying sigh,
And I did pray God's grace might rest on him.—
Then, lo! a gentle voice fell on mine ears—
"Thou shalt not sob in suppliance hereafter;
Take up thy prayers and wring them dry of tears,
And lift them, white and pure with love and laughter!"

So is it now for all men else I pray;
So is it I am blest and glad alway.

43 *Who Bides His Time*

WHO bides his time, and day by day
Faces defeat full patiently,
And lifts a mirthful roundelay,
However poor his fortunes be,—
He will not fail in any qualm
Of poverty—the paltry dime
It will grow golden in his palm,
Who bides his time.

Who bides his time—he tastes the sweet
Of honey in the saltest tear;
And though he fares with slowest feet,
Joy runs to meet him, drawing near:
The birds are heralds of his cause;
And, like a never-ending rhyme,
The roadsides bloom in his applause,
Who bides his time.

Who bides his time, and fevers not
In the hot race that none achieves,
Shall wear cool-wreathen laurel, wrought
With crimson berries in the leaves;
And he shall reign a goodly king,
And sway his hand o'er every clime,
With peace writ on his signet-ring,
Who bides his time.

44 *The Harper*

LIKE a drift of faded blossoms
Caught in a slanting rain,
His fingers glimpsed down the strings of his harp
In a tremulous refrain:

Patter and tinkle, and drip and drip!
Ah! but the chords were rainy sweet!
And I closed my eyes and I bit my lip,
As he played there in the street.

Patter, and drip, and tinkle!
And there was the little bed
In the corner of the garret,
And the rafters overhead!

And there was the little window—
Tinkle, and drip, and drip!—
The rain above, and a mother's love,
And God's companionship!

45 *A Song*

THERE is ever a song somewhere, my dear;
There is ever a something sings alway:
There's the song of the lark when the skies are clear,
And the song of the thrush when the skies are gray.
The sunshine showers across the grain,
And the bluebird trills in the orchard tree;
And in and out, when the eaves drip rain,
The swallows are twittering ceaselessly.

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
Be the skies above or dark or fair,
There is ever a song that our hearts may hear—
There is ever a song somewhere, my dear—
There is ever a song somewhere!

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
In the midnight black, or the mid-day blue:
The robin pipes when the sun is here,
And the cricket chirrups the whole night through.

The buds may blow, and the fruit may grow,
  And the autumn leaves drop crisp and sear;
But whether the sun, or the rain, or the snow,
  There is ever a song somewhere, my dear.

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
  Be the skies above or dark or fair,
There is ever a song that our hearts may hear—
There is ever a song somewhere, my dear—
  There is ever a song somewhere!

46 *A Fruit-Piece*

THE afternoon of summer folds
Its warm arms round the marigolds,

And, with its gleaming fingers, pets
The watered pinks and violets

That from the casement vases spill,
Over the cottage window-sill,

Their fragrance down the garden walks
Where droop the dry-mouthed hollyhocks.

How vividly the sunshine scrawls
The grape-vine shadows on the walls!

How like a truant swings the breeze
In high boughs of the apple-trees!

The slender "free-stone" lifts aloof,
Full languidly above the roof,

A hoard of fruitage, stamped with gold
And precious mintings manifold.

High up, through curled green leaves, a pear
Hangs hot with ripeness here and there.

Beneath the sagging trellisings,
In lush, lack-lustre clusterings,

Great torpid grapes, all fattened through
With moon and sunshine, shade and dew,

Until their swollen girths express
But forms of limp deliciousness—

Drugged to an indolence divine
With heaven's own sacramental wine.

47 *If I Knew What Poets Know*

IF I knew what poets know,
Would I write a rhyme
Of the buds that never blow
In the summer-time?
Would I sing of golden seeds
Springing up in ironweeds?
And of raindrops turned to snow,
If I knew what poets know?

Did I know what poets do,
  Would I sing a song
Sadder than the pigeon's coo
  When the days are long?
Where I found a heart in pain,
I would make it glad again;
And the false should be the true,
Did I know what poets do.

If I knew what poets know,
  I would find a theme
Sweeter than the placid flow
  Of the fairest dream:
I would sing of love that lives
On the errors it forgives;
And the world would better grow
If I knew what poets know.

48 *Where the Children Used to Play*

THE old farm-home is Mother's yet and mine,
  And filled it is with plenty and to spare,—
But we are lonely here in life's decline,
  Though fortune smiles around us everywhere:
    We look across the gold
    Of the harvests, as of old—
  The corn, the fragrant clover, and the hay;
    But most we turn our gaze,
    As with eyes of other days,
  To the orchard where the children used to play.

O from our life's full measure
And rich hoard of worldly treasure
We often turn our weary eyes away,
And hand in hand we wander
Down the old path winding yonder
To the orchard where the children used to play.

Our sloping pasture-lands are filled with herds;
The barn and granary-bins are bulging o'er;
The grove's a paradise of singing birds—
The woodland brook leaps laughing by the door;
Yet lonely, lonely still,
Let us prosper as we will,
Our old hearts seem so empty everyway—
We can only through a mist
See the faces we have kissed
In the orchard where the children used to play.

O from our life's full measure
And rich hoard of worldly treasure
We often turn our weary eyes away,
And hand in hand we wander
Down the old path winding yonder
To the orchard where the children used to play.

49 *Pan*

THIS Pan is but an idle god, I guess,
Since all the fair midsummer of my dreams
He loiters listlessly by woody streams,
Soaking the lush glooms up with laziness;
Or drowsing while the maiden-winds caress
Him prankishly, and powder him with gleams
Of sifted sunshine. And he ever seems
Drugged with a joy unutterable—unless
His low pipes whistle hints of it far out
Across the ripples to the dragon-fly
That, like a wind-born blossom blown about,
Drops quiveringly down, as though to die—
Then lifts and wavers on, as if in doubt
Whether to fan his wings or fly without.

50 *Kissing the Rod*

O HEART of mine, we shouldn't
Worry so!
What we've missed of calm we couldn't
Have, you know!
What we've met of stormy pain,
And of sorrow's driving rain,
We can better meet again,
If it blow!

We have erred in that dark hour
We have known,
When our tears fell with the shower,
All alone!—
Were not shine and shadow blent
As the gracious Master meant?—
Let us temper our content
With His own.

For, we know, not every morrow
Can be sad;
So, forgetting all the sorrow
We have had,
Let us fold away our fears,
And put by our foolish tears,
And through all the coming years
Just be glad.

51 *The Legend Glorified*

"I DEEM that God is not disquieted"—
This in a mighty poet's rhymes I read;
And blazoned so forever doth abide
Within my soul the legend glorified.

Though awful tempests thunder overhead,
I deem that God is not disquieted,—
The faith that trembles somewhat yet is sure
Through storm and darkness of a way secure.

Bleak winters, when the naked spirit hears
The break of hearts, through stinging sleet of tears,
I deem that God is not disquieted;
Against all stresses am I clothed and fed.

Nay, even with fixed eyes and broken breath,
My feet dip down into the tides of death,
Nor any friend be left, nor prayer be said,
I deem that God is not disquieted.

52 *Wait for the Morning*

WAIT for the morning:—It will come, indeed,
As surely as the night hath given need.
The yearning eyes, at last, will strain their sight
No more unanswered by the morning light;
No longer will they vainly strive, through tears,
To pierce the darkness of thy doubts and fears,
But, bathed in balmy dews and rays of dawn,
Will smile with rapture o'er the darkness drawn.

Wait for the morning, O thou smitten child,
Scorned, scourged and persecuted and reviled—
Athirst and famishing, none pitying thee,
Crowned with the twisted thorns of agony—
No faintest gleam of sunlight through the dense
Infinity of gloom to lead thee thence.—
Wait for the morning:—It will come, indeed,
As surely as the night hath given need.

53 *Bells Jangled*

I LIE low-coiled in a nest of dreams;
The lamp gleams dim i' the odorous gloom,
And the stars at the casement leak long gleams
Of misty light through the haunted room
Where I lie low-coiled in dreams.

The night winds ooze o'er my dusk-drowned face
In a dewy flood that ebbs and flows,
Washing a surf of dim white lace
Under my throat and the dark red rose
In the shade of my dusk-drowned face.

There's a silken strand of some strange sound
Slipping out of a skein of song:
Eerily as a call unwound
From a fairy bugle, it slides along
In a silken strand of sound.

There's the tinkling drip of a faint guitar;
There's a gurgling flute, and a blaring horn
Blowing bubbles of tune afar
O'er the misty heights of the hills of morn,
To the drip of a faint guitar.

And I dream that I neither sleep nor wake—
Careless am I if I wake or sleep,
For my soul floats out on the waves that break
In crests of song on the shoreless deep
Where I neither sleep nor wake.

54 *An Old Sweetheart of Mine*

AN old sweetheart of mine!—Is this her presence here
with me,
Or but a vain creation of a lover's memory?
A fair, illusive vision that would vanish into air
Dared I even touch the silence with the whisper of a
prayer?

Nay, let me then believe in all the blended false and true—
The semblance of the *old* love and the substance of the
new,—
The *then* of changeless sunny days—the *now* of shower and
shine—
But Love forever smiling—as that old sweetheart of mine.

This ever-restful sense of *home*, though shouts ring in the
hall.—
The easy-chair—the old bookshelves and prints along the
wall;
The rare *Habanas* in their box, or gaunt churchwarden-
stem
That often wags, above the jar, derisively at them.

As one who cons at evening o'er an album, all alone,
And muses on the faces of the friends that he has known,
So I turn the leaves of Fancy, till, in shadowy design,
I find the smiling features of an old sweetheart of mine.

The lamplight seems to glimmer with a flicker of surprise,
As I turn it low—to rest me of the dazzle in my eyes,
And light my pipe in silence, save a sigh that seems to yoke
Its fate with my tobacco and to vanish with the smoke.

'Tis a *fragrant* retrospection,—for the loving thoughts that start
Into being are like perfume from the blossom of the heart;
And to dream the old dreams over is a luxury divine—
When my truant fancies wander with that old sweetheart of mine.

Though I hear beneath my study, like a fluttering of wings,
The voices of my children and the mother as she sings—
I feel no twinge of conscience to deny me any theme
When Care has cast her anchor in the harbor of a dream—

In fact, to speak in earnest, I believe it adds a charm
To spice the good a trifle with a little dust of harm,—
For I find an extra flavor in Memory's mellow wine
That makes me drink the deeper to that old sweetheart of mine.

O Childhood-days enchanted! O the magic of the Spring!—
With all green boughs to blossom white, and all bluebirds to sing!
When all the air, to toss and quaff, made life a jubilee
And changed the children's song and laugh to shrieks of ecstasy.

With eyes half closed in clouds that ooze from lips that taste, as well,
The peppermint and cinnamon, I hear the old School-bell,
And from "Recess" romp in again from "Blackman's" broken line,
To smile, behind my "lesson," at that old sweetheart of mine.

A face of lily-beauty, with a form of airy grace,
Floats out of my tobacco as the Genii from the vase;
And I thrill beneath the glances of a pair of azure eyes
As glowing as the summer and as tender as the skies.

I can see the pink sunbonnet and the little checkered dress
She wore when first I kissed her and she answered the caress
With the written declaration that, "as surely as the vine
Grew 'round the stump," she loved me—that old sweetheart of mine.

Again I made her presents, in a really helpless way,—
The big "Rhode Island Greening"—I was hungry, too, that day!—
But I follow her from Spelling, with her hand behind her—so—
And I slip the apple in it—and the Teacher doesn't know!

I give my *treasures* to her—all,—my pencil—blue-and-red;—
And, if little girls played marbles, *mine* should all be *hers*, instead!
But *she* gave me her *photograph*, and printed "Ever Thine"
Across the back—in blue-and-red—that old sweetheart of mine!

And again I feel the pressure of her slender little hand,
As we used to talk together of the future we had planned,—
When I should be a poet, and with nothing else to do
But write the tender verses that she set the music to . . .

When we should live together in a cozy little cot
Hid in a nest of roses, with a fairy garden-spot,
Where the vines were ever fruited, and the weather ever fine,
And the birds were ever singing for that old sweetheart of mine.

When I should be her lover forever and a day,
And she my faithful sweetheart till the golden hair was gray;
And we should be so happy that when either's lips were dumb
They would not smile in Heaven till the other's kiss had come.

But, ah! my dream is broken by a step upon the stair,
And the door is softly opened, and—my wife is standing there:
Yet with eagerness and rapture all my visions I resign,—
To greet the *living* presence of that old sweetheart of mine.

55 *A Leave-Taking*

SHE will not smile;
She will not stir:
I marvel while
I look on her.
The lips are chilly
And will not speak;
The ghost of a lily
In either cheek.

Her hair—ah me!—
  Her hair—her hair!
How helplessly
  My hands go there!
    But my caresses
      Meet not hers,
    O golden tresses
      That thread my tears!

I kiss the eyes
  On either lid,
Where her love lies
  Forever hid.
    I cease my weeping
      And smile and say:
    I shall be sleeping
      Thus, some day!

56 *Kneeling With Herrick*

DEAR Lord, to Thee my knee is bent.—
  Give me content—
Full-pleasured with what comes to me,
  Whate'er it be:
An humble roof—a frugal board,
  And simple hoard;
The wintry fagot piled beside
  The chimney wide,

While the enwreathing flames up-sprout
And twine about
The brazen dogs that guard my hearth
And household worth:
Tinge with the embers' ruddy glow
The rafters low;
And let the sparks snap with delight,
As fingers might
That mark deft measures of some tune
The children croon:
Then, with good friends, the rarest few
Thou holdest true,
Ranged round about the blaze, to share
My comfort there,—
Give me to claim the service meet
That makes each seat
A place of honor, and each guest
Loved as the rest.

57 *Babyhood*

HEIGH-HO! Babyhood! Tell me where you linger!
Let's toddle home again, for we have gone astray;
Take this eager hand of mine and lead me by the finger
Back to the lotus-lands of the far-away!

Turn back the leaves of life.—Don't read the story.—
Let's find the *pictures*, and fancy all the rest;
We can fill the written pages with a brighter glory
Than Old Time, the story-teller, at his very best.

Turn to the brook where the honeysuckle tipping
  O'er its vase of perfume spills it on the breeze,
And the bee and humming-bird in ecstasy are sipping
  From the fairy-flagons of the blooming locust-trees.

Turn to the lane—where we used to "teeter-totter,"
  Printing little foot-palms in the mellow mold—
Laughing at the lazy cattle wading in the water
  Where the ripples dimple round the buttercups of gold.

Where the dusky turtle lies basking on the gravel
  Of the sunny sand-bar in the middle tide,
And the ghostly dragon-fly pauses in his travel
  To rest like a blossom where the water-lily died.

Heigh-ho! Babyhood! Tell me where you linger!
  Let's toddle home again, for we have gone astray;
Take this eager hand of mine and lead me by the finger
  Back to the lotus-lands of the far-away!

58 *In a Box*

I SAW them last night in a box at the play—
  Old age and young youth side by side.—
You might know by the glasses that pointed that way
  That they were—a groom and a bride;
And you might have known, too, by the face of the groom
  And the tilt of his head, and the grim
Little smile of his lip, he was proud to presume
  That we men were all envying him.

Well, she was superb—an Elaine in the face—
A Godiva in figure and mien,
With the arm and the wrist of a Parian "Grace,"
And the high-lifted brow of a queen;
But I thought, in the splendor of wealth and of pride
And her beauty's ostensible prize,
I should hardly be glad if she sat by my side
With that far-away look in her eyes.

59 *Lullaby*

THE maple strews the embers of its leaves
O'er the laggard swallows nestled 'neath the eaves;
And the moody cricket falters in his cry—Baby-bye!—
And the lid of night is falling o'er the sky—Baby-bye!—
The lid of night is falling o'er the sky!

The rose is lying pallid, and the cup
Of the frosted calla-lily folded up;
And the breezes through the garden sob and sigh—Baby-bye!—
O'er the sleeping blooms of Summer where they lie—Baby-bye!—
O'er the sleeping blooms of Summer where they lie!

Yet, Baby—O my Baby, for your sake
This heart of mine is ever wide awake,
And my love may never droop a drowsy eye—Baby-bye!—
Till your own are wet above me when I die—Baby-bye!—
Till your own are wet above me when I die.

60 *To My Good Master*

IN FANCY, always, at thy desk, thrown wide,
Thy most betreasured books ranged neighborly—
The rarest rhymes of every land and sea
And curious tongue—thine old face glorified,—
Thou haltest thy glib quill, and, laughing-eyed,
Givest hale welcome even unto me,
Profaning thus thine attic's sanctity,
Briefly to visit, yet to still abide
Enthralled there of thy sorcery of wit
And thy songs' most exceeding dear conceits.
O lips, cleft to the ripe core of all sweets,
With poems, like nectar, issuing therefrom,
Thy gentle utterances do overcome
My listening heart and all the love of it!

61 *Dear Hands*

THE touches of her hands are like the fall
Of velvet snowflakes; like the touch of down
The peach just brushes 'gainst the garden wall;
The flossy fondlings of the thistle-wisp
Caught in the crinkle of a leaf of brown
The blighting frost hath turned from green to crisp.

Soft as the falling of the dusk at night,
The touches of her hands, and the delight—
The touches of her hands!
The touches of her hands are like the dew
That falls so softly down no one e'er knew
The touch thereof save lovers like to one
Astray in lights where ranged Endymion.

O rarely soft, the touches of her hands,
As drowsy zephyrs in enchanted lands;
Or pulse of dying fay; or fairy sighs;
Or—in between the midnight and the dawn,
When long unrest and tears and fears are gone—
Sleep, smoothing down the lids of weary eyes.

62 *Three Dead Friends*

ALWAYS suddenly they are gone—
The friends we trusted and held secure—
Suddenly we are gazing on,
Not a *smiling* face, but the marble-pure
Dead mask of a face that nevermore
To a smile of ours will make reply—
The lips close-locked as the eyelids are.—
Gone—swift as the flash of the molten ore
A meteor pours through a midnight sky,
Leaving it blind of a single star.

Tell us, O Death, Remorseless Might!
What is this old, unescapable ire
You wreak on us?—from the birth of light
Till the world be charred to a core of fire!
We do no evil thing to you—
We seek to evade you—that is all—
That is your will—you will not be known
Of men. What, then, would you have us do?—
Cringe, and wait till your vengeance fall,
And your graves be fed, and the trumpet blown?

You desire no friends; but *we*—O we
  Need them so, as we falter here,
Fumbling through each new vacancy,
  As each is stricken that we hold dear.
One you struck but a year ago;
  And one not a month ago; and one—
    (God's vast pity!)—and one lies now
Where the widow wails, in her nameless woe,
  And the soldiers pace, with the sword and gun,
    Where the comrade sleeps, with the laureled brow.

And what did the first?—that wayward soul,
  Clothed of sorrow, yet nude of sin,
And with all hearts bowed in the strange control
  Of the heavenly voice of his violin.
Why, it was music the way he *stood*,
  So grand was the poise of the head and so
    Full was the figure of majesty!—
One heard with the eyes, as a deaf man would,
  And with all sense brimmed to the overflow
    With tears of anguish and ecstasy.

And what did the girl, with the great warm light
  Of genius sunning her eyes of blue,
With her heart so pure, and her soul so white—
  What, O Death, did she do to you?
Through field and wood as a child she strayed,
  As Nature, the dear [illegible] other, led;
    While from her canvas, mirrored back,
Glimmered the stream through the everglade
  Where the grape-vine trailed from the trees to wed
    Its likeness of emerald, blue, and black.

And what did he, who, the last of these,
  Faced you, with never a fear, O Death?
Did you hate *him* that he loved the breeze,
  And the morning dews, and the rose's breath?
Did you hate him that he answered not
  Your hate again—but turned, instead,
    His only hate on his country's wrongs?
Well—you possess him, dead!—but what
  Of the good he wrought?—With laureled head
    He bides with us in his deeds and songs.

Laureled, first, that he bravely fought,
  And forged a way to our flag's release;
Laureled, next, for the harp he taught
  To wake glad songs in the days of peace—
Songs of the woodland haunts he held
  As close in his love as they held their bloom
    In their inmost bosoms of leaf and vine—
Songs that echoed and pulsed and welled
  Through the town's pent streets, and the sick child's room,
    Pure as a shower in soft sunshine.

Claim them, Death; yet their fame endures.
  What friend next will you rend from us
In that cold, pitiless way of yours,
  And leave us a grief more dolorous?
Speak to us!—tell us, O Dreadful Power!—
  Are we to have not a lone friend left?—
    Since, frozen, sodden, or green the sod,
In every second of every hour,
  Some one, Death, you have thus bereft,
    Half inaudibly shrieks to God.

63

In the South

THERE is a princess in the South
About whose beauty rumors hum
Like honey-bees about the mouth
Of roses dewdrops falter from;
And O her hair is like the fine
Clear amber of a jostled wine
In tropic revels; and her eyes
Are blue as rifts of Paradise.

Such beauty as may none before
Kneel daringly, to kiss the tips
Of fingers such as knights of yore
Had died to lift against their lips:
Such eyes as might the eyes of gold
Of all the stars of night behold
With glittering envy, and so glare
In dazzling splendor of despair.

So, were I but a minstrel, deft
At weaving, with the trembling strings
Of my glad harp, the warp and weft
Of rondels such as rapture sings,—
I'd loop my lyre across my breast,
Nor stay me till my knee found rest
In midnight banks of bud and flower
Beneath my lady's lattice-bower.

And there, drenched with the teary dews,
I'd woo her with such wondrous art
As well might stanch the songs that ooze
Out of the mock-bird's breaking heart;

So light, so tender, and so sweet
Should be the words I would repeat,
Her casement, on my gradual sight,
Would blossom as a lily might.

64 *The Lost Path*

ALONE they walked—their fingers knit together
And swaying listlessly as might a swing
Wherein Dan Cupid dangled in the weather
Of some sun-flooded afternoon of Spring.

Within the clover-fields the tickled cricket
Laughed lightly as they loitered down the lane,
And from the covert of the hazel-thicket
The squirrel peeped and laughed at them again.

The bumblebee that tipped the lily-vases
Along the roadside in the shadows dim,
Went following the blossoms of their faces
As tho' their sweets must needs be shared with him.

Between the pasture bars the wondering cattle
Stared wistfully, and from their mellow bells
Shook out a welcoming whose dreamy rattle
Fell swooningly away in faint farewells.

And tho' at last the gloom of night fell o'er them
And folded all the landscape from their eyes,
They only knew the dusky path before them
Was leading safely on to Paradise.

65

In Bohemia

HA! MY DEAR! I'm back again—
Vendor of Bohemia's wares!
Lordy! How it pants a man
Climbing up those awful stairs!
Well, I've made the dealer say
Your sketch *might* sell, anyway!
And I've made a publisher
Hear my poem, Kate, my dear!

In Bohemia, Kate, my dear—
Lodgers in a musty flat
On the top floor—living here
Neighborless, and used to that,—
Like a nest beneath the eaves,
So our little home receives
Only guests of chirping cheer,
We'll be happy, Kate, my dear!

Under your north-light there, you
At your easel, with a stain
On your nose of Prussian blue,
Paint your bits of shine and rain;
With my feet thrown up at will
At my littered window-sill,
I write rhymes that ring as clear
As your laughter, Kate, my dear!

Puff my pipe, and stroke my hair—
Bite my pencil-tip and gaze
At you, mutely mooning there
O'er your "Aprils" and your "Mays!"—

Equal inspiration in
Dimples of your cheek and chin
And the golden atmosphere
Of your paintings, Kate, my dear!

Trying! Yes, at times it is,—
To clink happy rhymes, and fling
On the canvas scenes of bliss,
When we are half famishing!—
When your "jersey" rips in spots,
And your hat's "forget-me-nots"
Have grown tousled, old and sere—
It *is* trying, Kate, my dear!

But—as sure—*some* picture sells,
And—sometimes—the poetry.—
Bless us! How the parrot yells
His acclaims at you and me!
How we revel then in scenes
Of high banqueting!—sardines—
Salads—olives—and a sheer
Pint of sherry, Kate, my dear!

Even now I cross your palm
With this great round world of gold!—
"Talking wild?" Perhaps I am—
Then, this little five-year-old!—
Call it anything you will,
So it lifts your face until
I may kiss away that tear
Ere it drowns me, Kate, my dear!

66 *A Worn-Out Pencil*

WELLADAY!
Here I lay
You at rest—all worn away,
O my pencil, to the tip
Of our old companionship!

Memory
Sighs to see
What you are, and used to be,
Looking backward to the time
When you wrote your earliest rhyme!—

When I sat
Filing at
Your first point, and dreaming that
Your initial song should be
Worthy of posterity.

With regret
I forget
If the song be living yet,
Yet remember, vaguely now,
It was honest, anyhow.

You have brought
Me a thought—
Truer yet was never taught,—
That the silent song is best,
And the unsung worthiest.

So if I,
When I die,
May as uncomplainingly
Drop aside as now you do,
Write of me, as I of you:—

Here lies one
Who begun
Life a-singing, heard of none;
And he died, satisfied,
With his dead songs by his side.

67 *Where Shall We Land?*

"Where shall we land you, sweet?"—Swinburne

ALL listlessly we float
Out seaward in the boat
That beareth Love.
Our sails of purest snow
Bend to the blue below
And to the blue above.
Where shall we land?

We drift upon a tide
Shoreless on every side,
Save where the eye
Of Fancy sweeps far lands
Shelved slopingly with sands
Of gold and porphyry.
Where shall we land?

The fairy isles we see,
Loom up so mistily—
So vaguely fair,
We do not care to break
Fresh bubbles in our wake
To bend our course for there.
Where shall we land?

The warm winds of the deep
Have lulled our sails to sleep,
And so we glide
Careless of wave or wind,
Or change of any kind,
Or turn of any tide.
Where shall we land?

We droop our dreamy eyes
Where our reflection lies
Steeped in the sea,
And, in an endless fit
Of languor, smile on it
And its sweet mimicry.
Where shall we land?

"Where shall we land?" God's grace!
I know not any place
So fair as this—
Swung here between the blue
Of sea and sky, with you
To ask me, with a kiss,
"Where shall we land?"

68 *The Rain*

I

THE rain! the rain! the rain!
It gushed from the skies and streamed
Like awful tears; and the sick man thought
How pitiful it seemed!
And he turned his face away
And stared at the wall again,
His hopes nigh dead and his heart worn out.
O the rain! the rain! the rain!

II

The rain! the rain! the rain!
And the broad stream brimmed the shores;
And ever the river crept over the reeds
And the roots of the sycamores:
A corpse swirled by in a drift
Where the boat had snapt its chain—
And a hoarse-voiced mother shrieked and raved.
O the rain! the rain! the rain!

III

The rain! the rain! the rain!—
Pouring, with never a pause,
Over the fields and the green byways—
How beautiful it was!
And the new-made man and wife
Stood at the window-pane
Like two glad children kept from school.—
O the rain! the rain! the rain!

69 *The Drum*

O THE drum!
There is some
Intonation in thy grum
Monotony of utterance that strikes the spirit dumb,
As we hear,
Through the clear
And unclouded atmosphere,
Thy palpitating syllables roll in upon the ear!

There's a part
Of the art
Of thy music-throbbing heart
That thrills a something in us that awakens with a start,
And in rhyme
With the chime
And exactitude of time,
Goes marching on to glory to thy melody sublime.

And the guest
Of the breast
That thy rolling robs of rest
Is a patriotic spirit as a Continental dressed;
And he looms
From the glooms
Of a century of tombs,
And the blood he spilled at Lexington in living beauty blooms.

And his eyes
Wear the guise
Of a purpose pure and wise,
As the love of them is lifted to a something in the skies

That is bright
Red and white,
With a blur of starry light,
As it laughs in silken ripples to the breezes day and night.

There are deep
Hushes creep
O'er the pulses as they leap,
As thy tumult, fainter growing, on the silence falls asleep,
While the prayer
Rising there
Wills the sea and earth and air
As a heritage to Freedom's sons and daughters everywhere.

Then, with sound
As profound
As the thunderings resound,
Come thy wild reverberations in a throe that shakes the ground,
And a cry
Flung on high,
Like the flag it flutters by,
Wings rapturously upward till it nestles in the sky.

O the drum!
There is some
Intonation in thy grum
Monotony of utterance that strikes the spirit dumb,
As we hear,
Through the clear
And unclouded atmosphere,
Thy palpitating syllables roll in upon the ear!

70 *Has She Forgotten?*

I

HAS she forgotten? On this very May
We were to meet here, with the birds and bees.
As on that Sabbath, underneath the trees
We strayed among the tombs, and stripped away
The vines from these old granites, cold and gray—
And yet, indeed, not grim enough were they
To stay our kisses, smiles, and ecstasies,
Or closer voice-lost vows and rhapsodies.
Has she forgotten—that the May has won
Its promise?—that the bird-songs from the tree
Are sprayed above the grasses as the sun
Might jar the dazzling dew down showeringly?
Has she forgotten life—love—every one—
Has she forgotten me—forgotten me?

II

Low, low down in the violets I press
My lips and whisper to her. Does she hear,
And yet hold silence, though I call her dear,
Just as of old, save for the tearfulness
Of the clenched eyes, and the soul's vast distress?
Has she forgotten thus the old caress
That made our breath a quickened atmosphere
That failed nigh unto swooning with the sheer
Delight? Mine arms clutch now this earthen heap
Sodden with tears that flow on ceaselessly
As autumn rains the long, long, long nights weep
In memory of days that used to be,—
Has she forgotten these? And, in her sleep,
Has she forgotten me—forgotten me?

III

To-night, against my pillow, with shut eyes,
I mean to weld our faces—through the dense
Incalculable darkness make pretense
That she has risen from her reveries
To mate her dreams with mine in marriages
Of mellow palms, smooth faces, and tense ease
Of every longing nerve of indolence,—
Lift from the grave her quiet lips, and stun
My senses with her kisses—drawl the glee
Of her glad mouth, full blithe and tenderly,
Across mine own, forgetful if is done
The old love's awful dawn-time when said we,
"To-day is ours!" . . . Ah, Heaven! can it be
She has forgotten me—forgotten me!

71 *Moon-Drowned*

'TWAS the height of the fête when we quitted the riot
And quietly stole to the terrace alone,
Where, pale as the lovers that ever swear by it,
The moon it gazed down as a god from his throne:
We stood there enchanted.—And O the delight of
The sight of the stars and the moon and the sea,
And the infinite skies of that opulent night of
Purple and gold and ivory!

The lisp of the lip of the ripple just under—
The half-awake nightingale's dream in the yews—
Came up from the water, and down from the wonder
Of shadowy foliage, drowsed with the dews,—

Unsteady the firefly's taper—unsteady
The poise of the stars, and their light in the tide,
As it struggled and writhed in caress of the eddy,
As love in the billowy breast of a bride.

The far-away lilt of the waltz rippled to us,
And through us the exquisite thrill of the air:
Like the scent of bruised bloom was her breath, and its dew was
Not honeyer-sweet than her warm kisses were.
We stood there enchanted.—And O the delight of
The sight of the stars and the moon and the sea,
And the infinite skies of that opulent night of
Purple and gold and ivory!

72 *At Noon—And Midnight*

FAR in the night, and yet no rest for him! The pillow next his own
The wife's sweet face in slumber pressed—yet he awake alone! alone!
In vain he courted sleep;—one thought would ever in his heart arise,—
The harsh words that at noon had brought the teardrops to her eyes.

Slowly on lifted arm he raised and listened. All was still as death;
He touched her forehead as he gazed, and listened yet, with bated breath:

Still silently, as though he prayed, his lips moved lightly as
she slept—
For God was with him, and he laid his face with hers and
wept.

73 *When My Dreams Come True*

I

WHEN my dreams come true—when my dreams come
true—
Shall I lean from out my casement, in the starlight and the
dew,
To listen—smile and listen to the tinkle of the strings
Of the sweet guitar my lover's fingers fondle, as he sings?
And as the nude moon slowly, slowly shoulders into view,
Shall I vanish from his vision—when my dreams come
true?

When my dreams come true—shall the simple gown I wear
Be changed to softest satin, and my maiden-braided hair
Be raveled into flossy mists of rarest, fairest gold,
To be minted into kisses, more than any heart can hold?—
Or "the summer of my tresses" shall my lover liken to
"The fervor of his passion"—when my dreams come true?

II

When my dreams come true—I shall bide among the
sheaves
Of happy harvest meadows; and the grasses and the leaves
Shall lift and lean between me and the splendor of the sun,

Till the noon swoons into twilight, and the gleaners' work
is done—
Save that yet an arm shall bind me, even as the reapers do
The meanest sheaf of harvest—when my dreams come true.

When my dreams come true! when my dreams come true!
True love, in all simplicity, is fresh and pure as dew:—
The blossom in the blackest mold is kindlier to the eye
Than any lily born of pride that looms against the sky:
And so it is I know my heart will gladly welcome you,
My lowliest of lovers, when my dreams come true.

74 *The Bat*

I

THOU dread, uncanny thing,
With fuzzy breast and leathern wing,
In mad, zigzagging flight,
Notching the dusk, and buffeting
The black cheeks of the night,
With grim delight!

II

What witch's hand unhasps
Thy keen claw-cornered wings
From under the barn roof, and flings
Thee forth, with chattering gasps,
To scud the air,
And nip the ladybug, and tear
Her children's hearts out unaware?

III

The glow-worm's glimmer, and the bright,
Sad pulsings of the firefly's light,
  Are banquet-lights to thee.
O less than bird, and worse than beast,
Thou Devil's self, or brat, at least,
  Grate not thy teeth at me!

75 *In the Dark*

O IN the depths of midnight
  What fancies haunt the brain!
When even the sigh of the sleeper
  Sounds like a sob of pain.

A sense of awe and of wonder
  I may never well define,—
For the thoughts that come in the shadows
  Never come in the shine.

The old clock down in the parlor
  Like a sleepless mourner grieves,
And the seconds drip in the silence
  As the rain drips from the eaves.

And I think of the hands that signal
  The hours there in the gloom,
And wonder what angel watchers
  Wait in the darkened room.

And I think of the smiling faces
That used to watch and wait,
Till the click of the clock was answered
By the click of the opening gate.—

They are not there now in the evening—
Morning or noon—not there;
Yet I know that they keep their vigil,
And wait for me Somewhere.

76 *At Broad Ripple*

AH, LUXURY! Beyond the heat
And dust of town, with dangling feet
Astride the rock below the dam,
In the cool shadows where the calm
Rests on the stream again, and all
Is silent save the waterfall,—
I bait my hook and cast my line,
And feel the best of life is mine.

No high ambition may I claim—
I angle not for lordly game
Of trout, or bass, or wary bream—
A black perch reaches the extreme
Of my desires; and "goggle-eyes"
Are not a thing that I despise;
A sunfish, or a "chub," or "cat"—
A "silverside"—yea, even that!

In eloquent tranquillity
The waters lisp and talk to me.
Sometimes, far out, the surface breaks,
As some proud bass an instant shakes
His glittering armor in the sun,
And romping ripples, one by one,
Come dallying across the space
Where undulates my smiling face.

The river's story flowing by,
Forever sweet to ear and eye,
Forever tenderly begun—
Forever new and never done.
Thus lulled and sheltered in a shade
Where never feverish cares invade,
I bait my hook and cast my line,
And feel the best of life is mine.

RHYMES OF CHILDHOOD

77 *The Days Gone By*

O THE days gone by! O the days gone by!
The apples in the orchard, and the pathway through the rye;
The chirrup of the robin, and the whistle of the quail
As he piped across the meadows sweet as any nightingale;
When the bloom was on the clover, and the blue was in the sky,
And my happy heart brimmed over, in the days gone by.

In the days gone by, when my naked feet were tripped
By the honeysuckle tangles where the water-lilies dipped,
And the ripples of the river lipped the moss along the brink
Where the placid-eyed and lazy-footed cattle came to drink,
And the tilting snipe stood fearless of the truant's wayward cry
And the splashing of the swimmer, in the days gone by.

O the days gone by! O the days gone by!
The music of the laughing lip, the lustre of the eye;
The childish faith in fairies, and Aladdin's magic ring—
The simple, soul-reposing, glad belief in everything,
When life was like a story holding neither sob nor sigh,
In the golden olden glory of the days gone by.

78

Jack-In-The-Box

[*Grandfather, musing*]

IN childish days! O memory,
You bring such curious things to me!—
Laughs to the lip—tears to the eye,
In looking on the gifts that lie
Like broken playthings scattered o'er
Imagination's nursery floor!
Did these old hands once click the key
That let "Jack's" box-lid upward fly,
And that blear-eyed, fur-whiskered elf
Leap, as though frightened at himself,
And quiveringly lean and stare
At me, his jailer, laughing there?

A child then! Now— I only know
They call me very old; and so
They will not let me have my way,—
But uselessly I sit all day
Here by the chimney-jamb, and poke
The lazy fire, and smoke and smoke,
And watch the wreaths swoop up the flue,
And chuckle—ay, I often do—
Seeing again, all vividly,
Jack-in-the-box leap, as in glee
To see how much he looks like me!

. . . They talk. I can't hear what they say—
But I am glad, clean through and through
Sometimes, in fancying that they
Are saying, "Sweet, that fancy strays
In age back to our childish days!"

79 *The Funny Little Fellow*

'TWAS a Funny Little Fellow
Of the very purest type,
For he had a heart as mellow
As an apple overripe;
And the brightest little twinkle
When a funny thing occurred,
And the lightest little tinkle
Of a laugh you ever heard!

His smile was like the glitter
Of the sun in tropic lands,
And his talk a sweeter twitter
Than the swallow understands;
Hear him sing—and tell a story—
Snap a joke—ignite a pun,—
'Twas a capture—rapture—glory,
And explosion—all in one!

Though he hadn't any money—
That condiment which tends
To make a fellow "honey"
For the palate of his friends;—
Sweet simples he compounded—
Sovereign antidotes for sin
Or taint,—a faith unbounded
That his friends were genuine.

He wasn't honored, maybe—
For his songs of praise were slim,—
Yet I never knew a baby
That wouldn't crow for him;

I never knew a mother
But urged a kindly claim
Upon him as a brother,
At the mention of his name.

The sick have ceased their sighing,
And have even found the grace
Of a smile when they were dying
As they looked upon his face;
And I've seen his eyes of laughter
Melt in tears that only ran
As though, swift-dancing after,
Came the Funny Little Man.

He laughed away the sorrow
And he laughed away the gloom
We are all so prone to borrow
From the darkness of the tomb;
And he laughed across the ocean
Of a happy life, and passed,
With a laugh of glad emotion,
Into Paradise at last.

And I think the Angels knew him,
And had gathered to await
His coming, and run to him
Through the widely opened Gate,
With their faces gleaming sunny
For his laughter-loving sake,
And thinking, "What a funny
Little Angel he will make!"

80 *Uncle Sidney's Views*

I HOLD that the true age of wisdom is when
We are boys and girls, and not women and men.
When as credulous children we *know* things because
We *believe* them—however averse to the laws.
It is *faith*, then, not science and reason, I say,
That is genuine wisdom.—And would that to-day
We, as then, were as wise and ineffably blest
As to live, love and die, and trust God for the rest!

So I simply deny the old notion, you know,
That the wiser we get as the older we grow!—
For *in youth* all we know we are *certain* of.—*Now*
The greater our knowledge, the more we allow
For sceptical margin.—And hence I regret
That the world isn't flat, and the sun doesn't set,
And we may not go creeping up home, when we die,
Through the moon, like a round yellow hole in the sky.

81 *The Pixy People*

IT was just a very
Merry fairy dream!—
All the woods were airy
With the gloom and gleam;
Crickets in the clover
Clattered clear and strong,
And the bees droned over
Their old honey-song!

In the mossy passes,
  Saucy grasshoppers
Leaped about the grasses
  And the thistle-burs;
And the whispered chuckle
  Of the katydid
Shook the honeysuckle-
  Blossoms where he hid.

Through the breezy mazes
  Of the lazy June,
Drowsy with the hazes
  Of the dreamy noon,
Little Pixy people
  Winged above the walk,
Pouring from the steeple
  Of a mullein-stalk.

One—a gallant fellow—
  Evidently King,—
Wore a plume of yellow
  In a jewelled ring
On a pansy bonnet,
  Gold and white and blue,
With the dew still on it,
  And the fragrance, too.

One—a dainty lady,—
  Evidently Queen—
Wore a gown of shady
  Moonshine and green,

With a lace of gleaming
  Starlight that sent
All the dewdrops dreaming
  Everywhere she went.

One wore a waistcoat
  Of rose-leaves, out and in;
And one wore a faced-coat
  Of tiger-lily-skin;
And one wore a neat coat
  Of palest galingale;
And one a tiny street-coat,
  And one a swallow-tail.

And Ho! sang the King of them,
  And Hey! sang the Queen;
And round and round the ring of them
  Went dancing o'er the green;
And Hey! sang the Queen of them,
  And Ho! sang the King—
And all that I had seen of them
  —Wasn't anything!

It was just a very
  Merry fairy dream!—
All the woods were airy
  With the gloom and gleam;
Crickets in the clover
  Clattered clear and strong,
And the bees droned over
  Their old honey-song!

82

The Prayer Perfect

DEAR Lord! kind Lord!
Gracious Lord! I pray
Thou wilt look on all I love,
Tenderly to-day!
Weed their hearts of weariness;
Scatter every care
Down a wake of angel-wings
Winnowing the air.

Bring unto the sorrowing
All release from pain;
Let the lips of laughter
Overflow again;
And with all the needy
O divide, I pray,
This vast treasure of content
That is mine to-day!

83

Winter Fancies

I

WINTER without
And warmth within;
The winds may shout
And the storm begin;
The snows may pack
At the window-pane,
And the skies grow black,
And the sun remain
Hidden away
The livelong day—
But here—in here is the warmth of May!

II

Swoop your spitefullest
Up the flue,
Wild Winds—do!
What in the world do I care for you?
O delightfullest
Weather of all,
Howl and squall,
And shake the trees till the last leaves fall!

III

The joy one feels,
In an easy-chair,
Cocking his heels
In the dancing air
That wreathes the rim of a roaring stove
Whose heat loves better than hearts can love,
Will not permit
The coldest day
To drive away
The fire in his blood, and the bliss of it!

IV

Then blow, Winds, blow!
And rave and shriek,
And snarl and snow,
Till your breath grows weak—
While here in my room
I'm as snugly shut
As a glad little worm
In the heart of a nut!

84 *A Child's Home—Long Ago*

EVEN as the gas-flames flicker to and fro,
The Old Man's wavering fancies leap and glow.
As o'er the vision, like a mirage, falls
The old log cabin with its dingy walls,
And crippled chimney with its crutch-like prop
Beneath a sagging shoulder at the top:
The coonskin battened fast on either side—
The wisps of leaf-tobacco—"cut-and-dried";
The yellow strands of quartered apples, hung
In rich festoons that tangle in among
The morning-glory vines that clamber o'er
The little clapboard roof above the door:
The old well-sweep that drops a courtesy
To every thirsting soul so graciously,
The stranger, as he drains the dripping gourd,
Intuitively murmurs, "Thank the Lord!"
Again through mists of memory arise
The simple scenes of home before the eyes:—
The happy mother, humming, with her wheel,
The dear old melodies that used to steal
So drowsily upon the summer air,
The house-dog hid his bone, forgot his care,
And nestled at her feet, to dream, perchance,
Some cooling dream of winter-time romance:
The square of sunshine through the open door
That notched its edge across the puncheon floor,
And made a golden coverlet whereon
The god of slumber had a picture drawn
Of Babyhood, in all the loveliness
Of dimpled cheek and limb and linsey dress:

The rough-filled fireplace, and the mantel wide,
Its fire-scorched ankles stretched on either side,
Where, perched upon its shoulders 'neath the joist,
The old clock hiccoughed, harsh and husky-voiced,
And snarled the premonition, dire and dread,
When it should hammer Time upon the head:
Tomatoes, red and yellow, in a row,
Preserved not then for diet, but for show,—
Like rare and precious jewels in the rough
Whose worth was not appraised at half enough:
The jars of jelly, with their dusty tops;
The bunch of pennyroyal; the cordial drops;
The flask of camphor, and the vial of squills,
The box of buttons, garden-seeds, and pills;
And, ending all the mantel's bric-à-brac,
The old, time-honored "Family Almanack."
And memory, with a mother's touch of love,
Climbs with us to the dusky loft above,
Where drowsily we trail our fingers in
The mealy treasures of the harvest bin;
And, feeling with our hands the open track,
We pat the bag of barley on the back;
And, groping onward through the mellow gloom,
We catch the hidden apple's faint perfume,
And, mingling with it, fragrant hints of pear
And musky melon ripening somewhere.
Again we stretch our limbs upon the bed
Where first our simple childish prayers were said;
And while, without, the gallant cricket trills
A challenge to the solemn whippoorwills,

And, filing on the chorus with his glee,
The katydid whets all the harmony
To feather-edge of incoherent song,
We drop asleep, and peacefully along
The current of our dreams we glide away
To the dim harbor of another day.

85 *The Boys*

WHERE are they?—the friends of my childhood enchanted—
The clear, laughing eyes looking back in my own,
And the warm, chubby fingers my palms have so wanted,
As when we raced over
Pink pastures of clover,
And mocked the quail's whir and the bumblebee's drone?

Have the breezes of time blown their blossomy faces
Forever adrift down the years that are flown?
Am I never to see them romp back to their places,
Where over the meadow,
In sunshine and shadow,
The meadow-larks trill, and the bumblebees drone?

Where are they? Ah! dim in the dust lies the clover;
The whippoorwill's call has a sorrowful tone,
And the dove's—I have wept at it over and over;—
I want the glad lustre
Of youth, and the cluster
Of faces asleep where the bumblebees drone!

The bough-filled fireplace, and the mantel wide,
Its fire-scorched ankles stretched on either side,
Where, perched upon its shoulders 'neath the joist,
The old clock hiccoughed, harsh and husky-voiced,
And snarled the premonition, dire and dread,
When it should hammer Time upon the head:
Tomatoes, red and yellow, in a row,
Preserved not then for diet, but for show,—
Like rare and precious jewels in the rough
Whose worth was not appraised at half enough:
The jars of jelly, with their dusty tops;
The bunch of pennyroyal; the cordial drops;
The flask of camphor, and the vial of squills,
The box of buttons, garden-seeds, and pills;
And, ending all the mantel's bric-à-brac,
The old, time-honored "Family Almanack."
And memory, with a mother's touch of love,
Climbs with us to the dusky loft above,
Where drowsily we trail our fingers in
The mealy treasures of the harvest bin;
And, feeling with our hands the open track,
We pat the bag of barley on the back;
And, groping onward through the mellow gloom,
We catch the hidden apple's faint perfume,
And, mingling with it, fragrant hints of pear
And musky melon ripening somewhere.
Again we stretch our limbs upon the bed
Where first our simple childish prayers were said;
And while, without, the gallant cricket trills
A challenge to the solemn whippoorwills,

And, filing on the chorus with his glee,
The katydid whets all the harmony
To feather-edge of incoherent song,
We drop asleep, and peacefully along
The current of our dreams we glide away
To the dim harbor of another day.

85 *The Boys*

WHERE are they?—the friends of my childhood enchanted—
The clear, laughing eyes looking back in my own,
And the warm, chubby fingers my palms have so wanted,
As when we raced over
Pink pastures of clover,
And mocked the quail's whir and the bumblebee's drone?

Have the breezes of time blown their blossomy faces
Forever adrift down the years that are flown?
Am I never to see them romp back to their places,
Where over the meadow,
In sunshine and shadow,
The meadow-larks trill, and the bumblebees drone?

Where are they? Ah! dim in the dust lies the clover;
The whippoorwill's call has a sorrowful tone,
And the dove's—I have wept at it over and over;—
I want the glad lustre
Of youth, and the cluster
Of faces asleep where the bumblebees drone!

So filled with wildest glee, yet so serene
With innocence of song and childish chat,
With all the dear caresses in between—
Have you forgotten that?

Have you forgotten, knowing gentler charms,
The boisterous love of one you ran to greet
When you last met, who caught you in his arms
And kissed you, in the street?

Not very many days have passed since then,
And yet between that kiss and him there lies
No pathway of return—unless again,
In streets of Paradise,

Your eager feet come twinkling down the gold
Of some bright thoroughfare ethereal,
To meet and greet him there just as of old.—
Till then, farewell—farewell.

88 *Baby's Dying*

BABY'S dying,
Do not stir—
Let her spirit lightly float
Through the sighing
Lips of her—
Still the murmur in the throat;
Let the moan of grief be curbed—
Baby must not be disturbed!

Baby's dying,
Do not stir—
Let her pure life lightly swim
Through the sighing
Lips of her—
Out from us and up to HIM—
Let her leave us with that smile—
Kiss and miss her after while.

89 *Uninterpreted*

SUPINELY we lie in the grove's shady greenery,
Gazing, all dreamy-eyed, up through the trees,—
And as to the sight is the heavenly scenery,
So to the hearing the sigh of the breeze.

We catch but vague rifts of the blue through the wavering
Boughs of the maples; and, like undefined,
The whispers and lisps of the leaves, faint and quavering,
Meaningless falter and fall on the mind.

The vine, with its beauty of blossom, goes rioting
Up by the casement, as sweet to the eye
As the trill of the robin is restful and quieting
Heard in a drowse with the dawn in the sky.

And yet we yearn on to learn more of the mystery—
We see and we hear, but forever remain
Mute, blind and deaf to the ultimate history
Born of a rose or a patter of rain.

HE called her in from me and shut the door.
And she so loved the sunshine and the sky!—
She loved them even better yet than I
That ne'er knew dearth of them—my mother dead,
Nature had nursed me in her lap instead:
And I had grown a dark and eerie child
That rarely smiled,
Save when, shut all alone in gracious high,
Looking straight up in God's great turquoise sky
And coaxing Mother to smile back on me.
'Twas lying thus, this fair girl suddenly
Came on me, nestled in the fern beside
A pleasant-seeming home, with doorway wide—
The sunshine beating in upon the floor
Like golden rain.—
O sweet, sweet face whose ray turns again
And leaves me! I had much for that an ache
Within my throat so gripped it I could make
No sound but a thick sobbing. Cowering so,
I felt her light hand laid
Upon my hair—a touch that ne'er before
Had tamed me thus, all soothed and unafraid—
It seemed the touch the children used to know
When Christ was here, so dear it was—so dear.—
At once I loved her as the brown bees love
In midmost summer when the days are new.
Barely an hour I knew her, yet a curl
Of silken sunshine did she clip for me
Out of the bright May-morning of her hair,
And bound and gave it to me laughingly,

And caught my hands and called me *"Little girl,"*
Tiptoeing, as she spoke, to kiss me there!
And I stood dazed and dumb for very stress
Of my great happiness.
She plucked me by the gown, nor saw how mean
The raiment—drew me with her everywhere:
Smothered her face in tufts of grasses green:
Put up her dainty hands and peeped between
Her fingers at the blossoms—crooned and talked
To them in strange, glad whispers, as we walked,—
Said *this* one was her angel mother—*this,*
Her baby-sister—come back, for a kiss,
Clean from the Good-World!—smiled and kissed them.
then
Closed her soft eyes and kissed them o'er again.
And so did she beguile me—so we played,—
She was the dazzling Shine—I, the dark Shade—
And we did mingle like to these, and thus,
Together, made
The perfect summer, pure and glorious.
So blent we, till a harsh voice broke upon
Our happiness.—She, startled as a fawn,
Cried, "Oh, 'tis Father!"—all the blossoms gone
From out her cheeks as those from out her grasp.—
Harsher the voice came:—She could only gasp
Affrightedly, "Good-bye!—good-bye! good-bye!"
And lo, I stood alone, with that harsh cry
Ringing a new and unknown sense of shame
Through soul and frame,
And, with wet eyes, repeating o'er and o'er,—
"He called her in from me and shut the door!"

He called her in from me and shut the door!
And I went wandering alone again—
So lonely—O so very lonely then,
I thought no little sallow star, alone
In all a world of twilight, e'er had known
Such utter loneliness. But that I wore
Above my heart that gleaming tress of hair
To lighten up the night of my despair,
I think I might have groped into my grave
Nor cared to wave
The ferns above it with a breath of prayer.
And how I hungered for the sweet, sweet face
That bent above me in my hiding-place
That day amid the grasses there beside
Her pleasant home!—"Her *pleasant* home!" I sighed,
Remembering;—then shut my teeth and feigned
The harsh voice calling *me*,—then clinched my nails
So deeply in my palms, the sharp wounds pained,
And tossed my face toward heaven, as one who pales
In splendid martyrdom, with soul serene,
As near to God as high the guillotine.
And I had *envied* her? Not that—O no!
But I had longed for some sweet haven so!—
Wherein the tempest-beaten heart might ride
Sometimes at peaceful anchor, and abide
Where those that loved me touched me with their hands,
And looked upon me with glad eyes, and slipped
Smooth fingers o'er my brow, and lulled the strands
Of my wild tresses, as they backward tipped
My yearning face and kissed it satisfied.
Then bitterly I murmured as before,—
"He called her in from me and shut the door!"

He called her in from me and shut the door!
After long struggling with my pride and pain—
A weary while it seemed, in which the more
I held myself from her, the greater fain
Was I to look upon her face again;—
At last—at last—half conscious where my feet
Were faring, I stood waist-deep in the sweet
Green grasses there where she
First came to me.—
The very blossoms she had plucked that day,
And, at her father's voice, had cast away,
Around me lay,
Still bright and blooming in these eyes of mine;
And as I gathered each one eagerly,
I pressed it to my lips and drank the wine
Her kisses left there for the honey-bee.
Then, after I had laid them with the tress
Of her bright hair with lingering tenderness,
I, turning, crept on to the hedge that bound
Her pleasant-seeming home—but all around
Was never sign of her!—The windows all
Were blinded; and I heard no rippling fall
Of her glad laugh, nor any harsh voice call;—
But, clutching to the tangled grasses, caught
A sound as though a strong man bowed his head
And sobbed alone—unloved—uncomforted!—
And then straightway before
My tearless eyes, all vividly, was wrought
A vision that is with me evermore:—
A little girl that lies asleep, nor hears
Nor heeds not any voice nor fall of tears.—
And I sit singing o'er and o'er and o'er,—
"God called her in from him and shut the door!"

91 *Mother Goose*

DEAR Mother Goose! most motherly and dear
Of all good mothers who have laps wherein
We children nestle safest from all sin,—
I cuddle to thy bosom, with no fear
To there confess that though thy cap be queer,
And thy curls gimlety, and thy cheeks thin,
And though the winkered mole upon thy chin
Tickles thy very nose-tip,—still to hear
The jolly jingles of mine infancy
Crooned by thee, makes mine eager arms, as now,
To twine about thy neck full tenderly,
Drawing the dear old face down, that thy brow
May dip into my purest kiss, and be
Crowned ever with the baby-love of me.

92 *The All-Golden*

I

THROUGH every happy line I sing
I feel the tonic of the Spring.
The day is like an old-time face
That gleams across some grassy place—
An old-time face—an old-time chum
Who rises from the grave to come
And lure me back along the ways
Of time's all-golden yesterdays.
Sweet day! to thus remind me of
The truant boy I used to love—
To set, once more, his finger-tips
Against the blossom of his lips,
And pipe for me the signal known
By none but him and me alone!

II

I see, across the school-room floor,
The shadow of the open door,
And dancing dust and sunshine blent
Slanting the way the morning went,
And beckoning my thoughts afar
Where reeds and running waters are;
Where amber-colored bayous glass
The half-drown'd weeds and wisps of grass,
Where sprawling frogs, in loveless key,
Sing on and on incessantly.
Against the green wood's dim expanse
The cattail tilts its tufted lance,
While on its tip—one might declare
The white "snake-feeder" blossomed there!

III

I catch my breath, as children do
In woodland swings when life is new,
And all the blood is warm as wine
And tingles with a tang divine.
My soul soars up the atmosphere
And sings aloud where God can hear,
And all my being leans intent
To mark His smiling wonderment.
O gracious dream, and gracious time,
And gracious theme, and gracious rhyme—
When buds of Spring begin to blow
In blossoms that we used to know
And lure us back along the ways
Of time's all-golden yesterdays!

93 *Longfellow's Love for the Children*

AWAKE, he loved their voices,
And wove them into his rhyme;
And the music of their laughter
Was with him all the time.

Though he knew the tongues of nations,
And their meanings all were dear,
The prattle and lisp of a little child
Was the sweetest for him to hear.

94 *The Little-Red-Apple Tree*

THE Little-red-apple Tree!—
O the Little-red-apple Tree!
When I was the little-est bit of a boy
And you were a boy with me!
The bluebird's flight from the topmost boughs,
And the boys up there—so high
That we rocked over the roof of the house
And whooped as the winds went by!

Hey! The Little-red-apple Tree!
With the garden-beds below,
And the old grape-arbor so welcomely
Hiding the rake and hoe!
Hiding, too, as the sun dripped through
In spatters of wasted gold,
Frank and Amy away from you
And me in the days of old!

The Little-red-apple Tree!—
In the edge of the garden-spot,
Where the apples fell so lavishly
Into the neighbor's lot;—
So do I think of you alway,
Brother of mine, as the tree,—
Giving the ripest wealth of your love
To the world as well as me.

Ho! The Little-red-apple Tree!
Sweet as its juiciest fruit
Spanged on the palate spicily,
And rolled o'er the tongue to boot,
Is the memory still and the joy
Of the Little-red-apple Tree,
When I was the little-est bit of a boy
And you were a boy with me!

95 *The Way the Baby Slept*

THIS is the way the baby slept:
A mist of tresses backward thrown
By quavering sighs where kisses crept
With yearnings she had never known:
The little hands were closely kept
About a lily newly blown—
And God was with her. And we wept.
And this is the way the baby slept.

96 *McFeeters' Fourth*

IT was needless to say 'twas a glorious day.
And to boast of it all in that spread-eagle way
[illegible] our Forefathers had come the hour of the birth
Of this most patriotic republic on earth!
But 'twas justice, of course, to admit that the sight
Of the old Star-and-Stripes was a thing of delight
To the eyes of a fellow, however he tried
To look on the day with a dignified pride
That meant not to brook any ructious glee
Or riotous flourish of loud jubilee!

In around McFeeters, all grim and severe,
While the long night before, with a feeling of fear,
Had disturbed her [illegible]
Of the day-maiden over his quilt with the quirk
That the boy-hand who fir[illegible] were fast to the end
Of the stick to for ever and ever ascend!
[illegible] why the boy with the horn
And its horrible havoc had ever been born!
[illegible]
[illegible] Fourth of July arose, dyed in the dawn!

[illegible] yesterday morning, McFeeters arose,
With a fire in his eyes and a cloud in his nose,
And a guttural vocal in accent prime key
With a temper as gruff as a temper could be.
He growled at the servant he met on the stair,
Because he was whistling a sentimental air,
And he growled at the maid on the balcony rail
[illegible]

And he growled at his wife, as she buttoned his vest,
And applausively pinned a rosette on his breast
Of the national colors, and lured from his purse
Some change for the boys—for fire-crackers—or worse;
And she pointed with pride to a soldier in blue
In a frame on the wall, and the colors there, too;
And he felt, as he looked on the features, the glow
The painter found there twenty long years ago,
And a passionate thrill in his breast, as he felt
Instinctively round for the sword in his belt.

What was it that hung like a mist o'er the room?—
The tumult without—and the music—the boom
Of the cannon—the blare of the bugle and fife?—
No matter!—McFeeters was kissing his wife,
And laughing and crying and waving his hat
Like a genuine soldier, and crazy, at that!
—*Was* it needless to say 'twas a glorious day
And to boast of it all in that spread-eagle way
That our Forefathers had since the hour of the birth
Of this most patriotic republic on earth?

97 *The Way the Baby Came*

O THIS is the way the baby came:
Out of the night as comes the dawn;
Out of the embers as the flame;
Out of the bud the blossom on
The apple-bough that blooms the same
As in glad summers dead and gone—
With a grace and beauty none could name—
O this is the way the baby came!

98 *A Sleeping Beauty*

I

AN alien wind that blew and blew
Over the fields where the ripe grain grew,

Sending ripples of shine and shade
That crept and crouched at her feet and played.

The sea-like summer washed the moss
Till the sun-drenched lilies hung like floss,

Draping the throne of green and gold
That lulled her there like a queen of old.

II

Was it the hum of a bumblebee,
Or the long-hushed bugle eerily

Winding a call to the daring Prince
Lost in the wood long ages since?—

A dim old wood, with a palace rare
Hidden away in its depths somewhere!

Was it the Princess, tranced in sleep,
Awaiting her lover's touch to leap

Into the arms that bent above?—
To thaw his heart with the breath of love—

And cloy his lips, through her waking tears,
With the dead-ripe kiss of a hundred years!

III

An alien wind that blew and blew.—
I had blurred my eyes as the artists do,

Coaxing life to a half-sketched face,
Or dreaming bloom for a grassy place.

The bee droned on in an undertone;
And a shadow-bird trailed all alone

Across the wheat, while a liquid cry
Dripped from above, as it went by.

What to her was the far-off whir
Of the quail's quick wing or the chipmunk's chirr?—

What to her was the shade that slid
Over the hill where the reapers hid?—

Or what the hunter, with one foot raised,
As he turned to go—yet, pausing, gazed?

99 *Exceeding All*

LONG life's a lovely thing to know,
With lovely health and wealth, forsooth,
And lovely name and fame—But O
The loveliness of Youth!

100 *When Early March Seems Middle May*

WHEN country roads begin to thaw
In mottled spots of damp and dust,
And fences by the margin draw
Along the frosty crust
Their graphic silhouettes, I say,
The Spring is coming round this way.

When morning-time is bright with sun
And keen with wind, and both confuse
The dancing, glancing eyes of one
With tears that ooze and ooze—
And nose-tips weep as well as they,
The Spring is coming round this way.

When suddenly some shadow-bird
Goes wavering beneath the gaze,
And through the hedge the moan is heard
Of kine that fain would graze
In grasses new, I smile and say,
The Spring is coming round this way.

When knotted horse-tails are untied,
And teamsters whistle here and there,
And clumsy mitts are laid aside
And choppers' hands are bare,
And chips are thick where children play,
The Spring is coming round this way.

When through the twigs the farmer tramps,
And troughs are chunked beneath the trees,
And fragrant hints of sugar-camps
Astray in every breeze,—

When early March seems middle May,
The Spring is coming round this way.

When coughs are changed to laughs, and when
Our frowns melt into smiles of glee,
And all our blood thaws out again
In streams of ecstasy,
And poets wreak their roundelay,
The Spring is coming round this way.

101 *A Sudden Shower*

BAREFOOTED boys scud up the street
Or scurry under sheltering sheds;
And school-girl faces, pale and sweet,
Gleam from the shawls about their heads.

Doors bang; and mother-voices call
From alien homes; and rusty gates
Are slammed; and high above it all,
The thunder grim reverberates.

And then, abrupt,—the rain! the rain!—
The earth lies gasping; and the eyes
Behind the streaming window-pane
Smile at the trouble of the skies.

The highway smokes; sharp echoes ring;
The cattle bawl and cow-bells clank;
And into town comes galloping
The farmer's horse, with steaming flank.

The swallow dips beneath the eaves
And flirts his plumes and folds his wings;
And under the Catawba leaves
The caterpillar curls and clings.

The bumblebee is pelted down
The wet stem of the hollyhock;
And sullenly, in spattered brown,
The cricket leaps the garden-walk.

Within, the baby claps his hands
And crows with rapture strange and vague;
Without, beneath the rose-bush stands
A dripping rooster on one leg.

102 *The Song of Yesterday*

I

BUT yesterday
I looked away
O'er happy lands, where sunshine lay
In golden blots,
Inlaid with spots
Of shade and wild forget-me-nots.

My head was fair
With flaxen hair,
And fragrant breezes, faint and rare,
And, warm with drouth
From out the south,
Blew all my curls across my mouth.

And, cool and sweet,
My naked feet
Found dewy pathways through the wheat;
And out again
Where, down the lane,
The dust was dimpled with the rain.

II

But yesterday!—
Adream, astray,
From morning's red to evening's gray,
O'er dales and hills
Of daffodills
And lorn sweet-fluting whippoorwills.

I knew nor cares
Nor tears nor prayers—
A mortal god, crowned unawares
With sunset—and
A sceptre-wand
Of apple-blossoms in my hand!

The dewy blue
Of twilight grew
To purple, with a star or two
Whose lisping rays
Failed in the blaze
Of sudden fireflies through the haze.

III

But yesterday
I heard the lay
Of summer birds, when I, as they
With breast and wing,
All quivering
With life and love, could only sing.

My head was leant
Where, with it, blent
A maiden's, o'er her instrument;
While all the night,
From vale to height,
Was filled with echoes of delight.

And all our dreams
Were lit with gleams
Of that lost land of reedy streams,
Along whose brim
Forever swim
Pan's lilies, laughing up at him.

IV

But yesterday! . . .
O blooms of May,
And summer roses—where away?
O stars above;
And lips of love,
And all the honeyed sweets thereof!—

O lad and lass,
And orchard pass,
And briered lane, and daisied grass!
O gleam and gloom,
And woodland bloom,
And breezy breaths of all perfume!—

No more for me
Or mine shall be
Thy raptures—save in memory,—
No more—no more—
Till through the Door
Of Glory gleam the days of yore.

103 *Song—For November*

WHILE skies glint bright with bluest light
Through clouds that race o'er field and town,
And leaves go dancing left and right,
And orchard apples tumble down;
While school-girls sweet, in lane or street,
Lean 'gainst the wind and feel and hear
Its glad heart like a lover's beat,—
So reigns the rapture of the year.

Then ho! and hey! and whoop-hooray!
Though winter clouds be looming,
Remember a November day
Is merrier than mildest May
With all her blossoms blooming.

While birds in scattered flight are blown
  Aloft and lost in bosky mist,
And truant boys scud home alone
  'Neath skies of gold and amethyst;
While twilight falls, and echo calls
  Across the haunted atmosphere,
With low, sweet laughs at intervals,—
  So reigns the rapture of the year.

Then ho! and hey! and whoop-hooray!
  Though winter clouds be looming,
Remember a November day
Is merrier than mildest May
  With all her blossoms blooming.

104 *On the Sunny Side*

HI and whoop-hooray, boys!
  Sing a song of cheer!
Here's a holiday, boys,
  Lasting half a year!
Round the world, and half is
  Shadow we have tried;
Now we're where the laugh is,—
  On the sunny side!

Pigeons coo and mutter,
  Strutting high aloof
Where the sunbeams flutter
  Through the stable roof.

Hear the chickens cheep, boys,
And the hen with pride
Clucking them to sleep, boys,
On the sunny side!

Hear the clacking guinea;
Hear the cattle moo;
Hear the horses whinny,
Looking out at you!
On the hitching-block, boys,
Grandly satisfied,
See the old peacock, boys,
On the sunny side!

Robins in the peach-tree;
Bluebirds in the pear;
Blossoms over each tree
In the orchard there!
All the world's in joy, boys,
Glad and glorified
As a romping boy, boys,
On the sunny side!

Where's a heart as mellow—
Where's a soul as free—
Where is any fellow
We would rather be?
Just ourselves or none, boys,
World around and wide,
Laughing in the sun, boys,
On the sunny side!

105

His Christmas Sled

I

I WATCH him, with his Christmas sled;
He hitches on behind
A passing sleigh, with glad hooray,
And whistles down the wind;
He hears the horses champ their bits,
And bells that jingle-jingle—
You Woolly Cap! you Scarlet Mitts!
You miniature "Kriss Kringle!"

I almost catch your secret joy—
Your chucklings of delight,
The while you whiz where glory is
Eternally in sight!
With you I catch my breath, as swift
Your jaunty sled goes gliding
O'er glassy track and shallow drift,
As I behind were riding!

II

He winks at twinklings of the frost,
And on his airy race,
Its tingles beat to redder heat
The rapture of his face:—
The colder, keener is the air,
The less he cares a feather.
But, there! he's gone! and I gaze on
The wintriest of weather!

Ah, Boy! still speeding o'er the track
  Where none returns again,
To sigh for you, or cry for you,
  Or die for you were vain.—
And so, speed on! the while I pray
  All nipping frosts forsake you—
Ride still ahead of grief, but may
  All glad things overtake you!

106 *The Rider of the Knee*

KNIGHTLY Rider of the Knee
Of Proud-prancing Unclery!
Gaily mount, and wave the sign
Of that mastery of thine.

Pat thy steed and turn him free,
Knightly Rider of the Knee!
Sit thy charger as a throne—
Lash him with thy laugh alone:

Sting him only with the spur
Of such wit as may occur,
Knightly Rider of the Knee,
In thy shriek of ecstasy.

Would, as now, we might endure,
Twain as one—thou miniature
Ruler, at the rein of me—
Knightly Rider of the Knee!

107 *Dusk-Song—The Beetle*

THE shrilling locust slowly sheathes
His dagger-voice, and creeps away
Beneath the brooding leaves where breathes
The zephyr of the dying day:
One naked star has waded through
The purple shallows of the night,
And faltering as falls the dew
It drips its misty light.

O'er garden blooms,
On tides of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms
And bumps along the dusk.

The katydid is rasping at
The silence from the tangled broom:
On drunken wings the flitting bat
Goes staggering athwart the gloom;
The toadstool bulges through the weeds,
And lavishly to left and right
The fireflies, like golden seeds,
Are sown about the night.

O'er slumbrous blooms,
On floods of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms
And bumps along the dusk.

The primrose flares its baby-hands
Wide open, as the empty moon,
Slow lifted from the underlands,
Drifts up the azure-arched lagoon;

The shadows on the garden walk
  Are frayed with rifts of silver light;
And, trickling down the poppy-stalk,
  The dewdrop streaks the night.

O'er folded blooms,
  On swirls of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms
  And bumps along the dusk.

108 *Billy Could Ride*

I

BILLY was born for a horse's back!—
That's what Grandfather used to say:—
He'd seen him in dresses, a-many a day,
On a two-year-old, in the old barn-lot,
Prancing around, with the bridle slack,
And his two little sunburnt legs outshot
So straight from the saddle-seat you'd swear
A spirit-level had plumbed him there!
And all the neighbors that passed the place
Would just haul up in the road and stare
To see the little chap's father boost
The boy up there on his favorite roost,
To canter off, with a laughing face.—
Put him up there, he was satisfied—
And O the way that Billy could ride!

II

At celebration or barbecue—
And Billy, a boy of fifteen years—
Couldn't he cut his didoes there?—
What else would you expect him to,
On his little mettlesome chestnut mare,
With her slender neck, and her pointed ears,
And the four little devilish hooves of hers?
The "delegation" moved too slow
For the time that Billy wanted to go!
And to see him dashing out of the line
At the edge of the road and down the side
Of the long procession, all laws defied,
And the fife and drums, was a sight divine
To the girls, in their white-and-spangled pride,
Wearily waving their scarfs about
In the great "Big Wagon," all gilt without
And jolt within, as they lumbered on
Into the town where Billy had gone
An hour ahead, like a knightly guide—
O but the way that Billy could ride!

III

"Billy can ride! Oh, Billy can ride!
But what on earth can he do beside?"
That's what the farmers used to say,
As time went by a year at a stride,
And Billy was twenty if he was a day!
And many a wise old father's foot
Was put right down where it should be put,

While many a dutiful daughter sighed
In vain for one more glorious ride
With the gallant Billy, who none the less
Smiled at the old man's selfishness
And kissed his daughter, and rode away,—
Touched his horse in the flank—and *zipp!*—
Talk about horses and horsemanship!—
Folks stared after him just wild-eyed. . . .
Oomh! the way that Billy could ride!

109 *Honey Dripping From the Comb*

HOW slight a thing may set one's fancy drifting
Upon the dead sea of the Past!—A view—
Sometimes an odor—or a rooster lifting
A far-off *"Ooh! ooh-ooh!"*

And suddenly we find ourselves astray
In some wood's-pasture of the Long Ago—
Or idly dream again upon a day
Of rest we used to know.

I bit an apple but a moment since—
A wilted apple that the worm had spurned;—
Yet hidden in the taste were happy hints
Of good old days returned.—

And so my heart, like some enraptured lute,
Tinkles a tune so tender and complete,
God's blessing must be resting on the fruit—
So bitter, yet so sweet!

110 *Time of Clearer Twitterings*

I

TIME of crisp and tawny leaves,
And of tarnished harvest sheaves,
And of dusty grasses—weeds—
Thistles, with their tufted seeds
Voyaging the Autumn breeze
Like as fairy argosies:
Time of quicker flash of wings,
And of clearer twitterings
In the grove or deeper shade
Of the tangled everglade,—
Where the spotted water-snake
Coils him in the sunniest brake;
And the bittern, as in fright,
Darts, in sudden, slanting flight,
Southward, while the startled crane
Films his eyes in dreams again.

II

Down along the dwindled creek
We go loitering. We speak
Only with old questionings
Of the dear remembered things
Of the days of long ago,
When the stream seemed thus and so
In our boyish eyes:—The bank
Greener then, through rank on rank
Of the mottled sycamores,
Touching tops across the shores:

Here, the hazel thicket stood—
There, the almost pathless wood
Where the shellbark hickory-tree
Rained its wealth on you and me.
Autumn! as you loved us then,
Take us to your heart again!

III

Season halest of the year
How the zestful atmosphere
Nettles blood and brain and smites
Into life the old delights
We have wasted in our youth,
And our graver years, forsooth!
How again the boyish heart
Leaps to see the chipmunk start
From the brush and sleek the sun's
Very beauty, as he runs!
How again a subtle hint
Of crushed pennyroyal or mint
Sends us on our knees, as when
We were truant boys of ten—
Brown marauders of the wood,
Merrier than Robin Hood!

IV

Ah! will any minstrel say,
In his sweetest roundelay,
What is sweeter, after all,
Than black haws, in early Fall?—

Fruit so sweet the frost first sat,
Dainty-toothed, and nibbled at!
And will any poet sing
Of a lusher, richer thing
Than a ripe May-apple, rolled
Like a pulpy lump of gold
Under thumb and finger-tips,
And poured molten through the lips?
Go, ye bards of classic themes,
Pipe your songs by classic streams!
I would twang the redbird's wings
In the thicket while he sings!

III *Curly Locks*

CURLY Locks! Curly Locks! wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash the dishes, nor yet feed the swine,—
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream.

Curly Locks! Curly Locks! wilt thou be mine?
The throb of my heart is in every line,
And the pulse of a passion as airy and glad
In its musical beat as the little Prince had!

Thou shalt not wash the dishes, nor yet feed the swine!
O I'll dapple thy hands with these kisses of mine
Till the pink of the nail of each finger shall be
As a little pet blush in full blossom for me.

But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And thou shalt have fabric as fair as a dream,—
The red of my veins, and the white of my love,
And the gold of my joy for the braiding thereof.

And feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream
From a service of silver, with jewels agleam,—
At thy feet will I bide, at thy beck will I rise,
And twinkle my soul in the night of thine eyes!

Curly Locks! Curly Locks! wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash the dishes, nor yet feed the swine,—
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream.

112 *Pansies*

PANSIES! Pansies! How I love you, pansies!
Jaunty-faced, laughing-lipped and dewy-eyed with glee;
Would my song but blossom out in little five-leaf stanzas
As delicate in fancies
As your beauty is to me!

But my eyes shall smile on you, and my hands infold you.
Pet, caress, and lift you to the lips that love you so,
That, shut ever in the years that may mildew or mould you,
My fancy shall behold you
Fair as in the long ago.

113 *The Brook-Song*

LITTLE brook! Little brook!
You have such a happy look—
Such a very merry manner, as you swerve and curve and crook—
And your ripples, one and one,
Reach each other's hands and run
Like laughing little children in the sun!

Little brook, sing to me:
Sing about a bumblebee
That tumbled from a lily-bell and grumbled mumblingly,
Because he wet the film
Of his wings, and had to swim,
While the water-bugs raced round and laughed at him!

Little brook—sing a song
Of a leaf that sailed along
Down the golden-braided centre of your current swift and strong,
And a dragon-fly that lit
On the tilting rim of it,
And rode away and wasn't scared a bit.

And sing—how oft in glee
Came a truant boy like me,
Who loved to lean and listen to your lilting melody,
Till the gurgle and refrain
Of your music in his brain
Wrought a happiness as keen to him as pain.

Little brook—laugh and leap!
Do not let the dreamer weep:
Sing him all the songs of summer till he sink in softest sleep;
And then sing soft and low
Through his dreams of long ago—
Sing back to him the rest he used to know!

114 *A Nonsense Rhyme*

RINGLETY-JING!
And what will we sing?
Some little crinkety-crankety thing
That rhymes and chimes,
And skips, sometimes,
As though wound up with a kink in the spring.

Grunkety-krung!
And chunkety-plung!
Sing the song that the bullfrog sung,—
A song of the soul
Of a mad tadpole
That met his fate in a leaky bowl:
And it's O for the first false wiggle he made
In a sea of pale pink lemonade!
And it's O for the thirst
Within him pent,
And the hopes that burst
As his reason went—
When his strong arm failed and his strength was spent!

Sing, O sing
Of the things that cling,
And the claws that clutch and the fangs that sting—
Till the tadpole's tongue
And his tail upflung
Quavered and failed with a song unsung!
O the dank despair in the rank morass,
Where the crawfish crouch in the cringing grass,
And the long limp rune of the loon wails on
For the mad, sad soul
Of a bad tadpole
Forever lost and gone!

Jinglety-jee!
And now we'll see
What the last of the lay shall be,
As the dismal tip of the tune, O friends,
Swoons away and the long tale ends.
And it's O and alack!
For the tangled legs
And the spangled back
Of the green grig's eggs,
And the unstrung strain
Of the strange refrain
That the winds wind up like a strand of rain!

And it's O,
Also,
For the ears wreathed low,
Like a laurel-wreath on the lifted brow
Of the frog that chants of the why and how,

And the wherefore too, and the thus and so
Of the wail he weaves in a woof of woe!
Twangle, then, with your wrangling strings,
The tinkling links of a thousand things!
And clang the pang of a maddening moan
Till the Echo, hid in a land unknown,
Shall leap as he hears, and hoot and hoo
Like the wretched wraith of a Whoopty-Doo!

115 *The Dream of the Little Princess*

'TWAS a curious dream, good sooth!—
The dream of The Little Princess;
It seemed a dream, yet a truth,
Long years ago in her youth.—
It *came* as a dream—no less
It was *not* a dream, she says.

(She is singing and saying things
Musical as the wile
Of the eerie quaverings
That drip from the grievèd strings
Of her lute.—We weep or smile
Even as she, meanwhile.)

In a day, long dead and gone,
When her castle-turrets threw
Their long, sharp shadows on
The sward like lances,—wan
And lone, she strayed into
Strange grounds where lilies grew.

There, late in the afternoon,
As she sate in the terrace shade,
Rav'ling a half-spun tune
From a lute like a wee new-moon,—
High off was a bugle played,
And a sound as of steeds that neighed.

And the lute fell from her hands,
As her eyes raised, half in doubt,
To the arch of the azure lands
Where lo! with the fluttering strands
Of a rainbow reined about
His wrist, rode a horseman out.

And The Little Princess was stirred
No less at his steeds than him;—
A jet-black span of them gird
In advance, he bestrode the third;
And the troop of them seemed to swim
The skies as the Seraphim.

Wingless they were, yet so
Upborne in their wondrous flight—
As their master bade them go,
They dwindled on high; or lo!
They curved from their heavenmost height
And swooped to her level sight.

And the eyes of The Little Princess
Grow O so bright as the chants
Of the horseman's courtliness,—
Saluting her low—Ah, yes!
And lifting a voice that haunts
Her own song's weird romance.

For (she sings) at last he swept
As near to her as the tips
Of the lilies, that whitely slept,
As he leaned o'er one and wept
And touched it with his lips—
Sweeter than honey-drips!

And she keeps the lily yet—
As the horseman bade (she says)
As he launched, with a wild curvet,
His steeds toward the far sunset,
Till gulfed in its gorgeousness
And lost to The Little Princess:

But O, my master sweet!
He is coming again! (she sings)
My Prince of the Coursers fleet,
With his bugle's echoings,
And the breath of his voice for the wings
Of the sandals of his feet!

116. *The Way the Baby Woke*

AND this is the way the baby woke:
As when in deepest drops of dew
The shine and shadows sink and soak,
The sweet eyes glimmered through and through;
And eddyings and dimples broke
About the lips, and no one knew
Or could divine the words they spoke—
And this is the way the baby woke.

117 *The Circus-Day Parade*

O! the Circus-Day Parade! How the bugles played
and played!
And how the glossy horses tossed their flossy manes and
neighed,
As the rattle and the rhyme of the tenor-drummer's time
Filled all the hungry hearts of us with melody sublime!

How the grand band-wagon shone with a splendor all its
own,
And glittered with a glory that our dreams had never
known!
And how the boys behind, high and low of every kind,
Marched in unconscious capture, with a rapture undefined!

How the horsemen, two and two, with their plumes of
white and blue
And crimson, gold and purple, nodding by at me and you,
Waved the banners that they bore, as the knights in days of
yore,
Till our glad eyes gleamed and glistened like the spangles
that they wore!

How the graceless-graceful stride of the elephant was eyed,
And the capers of the little horse that cantered at his side!
How the shambling camels, tame to the plaudits of their
fame,
With listless eyes came silent, masticating as they came.

How the cages jolted past, with each wagon battened fast,
And the mystery within it only hinted of at last
From the little grated square in the rear, and nosing there
The snout of some strange animal that sniffed the outer
air!

And, last of all, The Clown, making mirth for all the town,
With his lips curved ever upward and his eyebrows ever down,
And his chief attention paid to the little mule that played
A tattoo on the dash-board with his heels, in the Parade.

Oh! the Circus-Day Parade! How the bugles played and played!
And how the glossy horses tossed their flossy manes and neighed,
As the rattle and the rhyme of the tenor-drummer's time
Filled all the hungry hearts of us with melody sublime!

118 *Little Girly-Girl*

LITTLE Girly-Girl, of you
Still forever I am dreaming.—
Laughing eyes of limpid blue—
Tresses glimmering and gleaming
Like glad waters running over
Shelving shallows, rimmed with clover,
Trembling where the eddies whirl,
Gurgling, "Little Girly-Girl!"

For your name it came to me
Down the brink of brooks that brought it
Out of Paradise—and we—
Love and I—we, leaning, caught it
From the ripples romping nigh us,
And the bubbles bumping by us
Over shoals of pebbled pearl,
Lilting, "Little Girly-Girl!"

That was long and long ago,
  But in memory the tender
Winds of summer weather blow,
  And the roses burst in splendor;
And the meadow's grassy billows
Break in blossoms round the willows
  Where the currents curve and curl,
  Calling, "Little Girly-Girl!"

119 *The Boy-Friend*

CLARENCE, my boy-friend, hale and strong!
  O he is as jolly as he is young;
And all of the laughs of the lyre belong
  To the boy all unsung:

So I want to sing something in his behalf—
  To clang some chords, for the good it is
To know he is near, and to have the laugh
  Of that wholesome voice of his.

I want to tell him in gentler ways
  Than prose may do, that the arms of rhyme
Warm and tender with tuneful praise,
  Are about him all the time.

I want him to know that the quietest nights
  We have passed together are yet with me,
Roistering over the old delights
  That were born of his company.

I want him to know how my soul esteems
The fairy stories of Andersen,
And the glad translations of all the themes
Of the hearts of boyish men.

Want him to know that my fancy flows,
With the lilt of a dear old-fashioned tune,
Through "Lewis Carroll's" poemly prose,
And the tale of "The Bold Dragoon."

O this is the Prince that I would sing—
Would drape and garnish in velvet line,
Since courtlier far than any king
Is this brave boy-friend of mine.

120 *The Old, Old Wish*

LAST night, in some lost mood of meditation,
The while my dreamy vision ranged the far
Unfathomable arches of creation,
I saw a falling star:

And as my eyes swept round the path it embered
With the swift-dying glory of its glow,
With sudden intuition I remembered,
A wish of long ago—

A wish that, were it made—so ran the fancy
Of credulous young lover and of lass—
As fell a star, by some strange necromancy,
Would surely come to pass.

And, of itself, the wish, reiterated
A thousand times in youth, flashed o'er my brain
And, like the star, as soon obliterated,
Dropped into night again.

For my old heart had wished for the unending
Devotion of a little maid of nine—
And that the girl heart, with the woman's blending,
Might be forever mine.

And so it was, with eyelids raised, and weighty
With ripest clusterings of sorrow's dew,
I cried aloud through heaven: "O little Katie!
When will my wish come true?"

121 *A Mother-Song*

MOTHER, O mother! forever I cry for you
Since the old years I may never forget:
Ever in slumber I murmur and sigh for you.—
Mother, O Mother,
Sing low, "Little brother,
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

Mother, O mother! the years are so lonely,
Filled but with weariness, doubt and regret!
Can't you come back to me—for to-night only
Mother, my mother,
And sing, "Little brother,
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

Mother, O mother! of old I had never
One wish denied me, nor trouble to fret;
Now—must I cry out all vainly forever,—
Mother, sweet mother,
O sing, "Little brother,
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

Mother, O mother! must longing and sorrow
Leave me in darkness, with eyes ever wet,
And never the hope of a meeting to-morrow?
Answer me, mother,
And sing, "Little brother,
Sleep, for thy mother bends over thee yet!"

122

With the Current

RAREST mood of all the year!
Aimless, idle, and content—
Sky and wave and atmosphere
Wholly indolent.

Little daughter, loose the band
From your tresses—let them pour
Shadow-like o'er arm and hand
Idling at the oar.

Low and clear, and pure and deep,
Ripples of the river sing—
Water-lilies, half asleep,
Drowsed with listening:

Tremulous reflex of skies—
  Skies above and skies below,—
Paradise and Paradise
    Blending even so!

Blossoms with their leaves unrolled
  Laughingly, as they were lips
Cleft with ruddy beaten gold
    Tongues of pollen-tips.

Rush and reed, and thorn and vine,
  Clumped with grasses lithe and tall—
With a web of summer-shine
    Woven round it all.

Back and forth, and to and fro—
  Flashing scale and wing as one,—
Dragon-flies that come and go,
    Shuttled by the sun.

Fairy lilts and lullabies,
  Fine as fantasy conceives,—
Echoes wrought of cricket-cries
    Sifted through the leaves.

O'er the rose, with drowsy buzz,
  Hangs the bee, and stays his kiss,
Even as my fancy does,
    Gypsy, over this.

Let us both be children—share
  Youth's glad voyage night and day,
Drift adown it, half aware,
    Anywhere we may.—

Drift and curve and deviate,
  Veer and eddy, float and flow,
Waver, swerve and undulate,
    As the bubbles go.

123

The Hunter Boy

HUNTER Boy of Hazelwood—
  Happier than Robin Hood!
Dance across the green, and stand
Suddenly, with lifted hand
Shading eager eyes, and be
Thus content to capture me!—
Cease thy quest for wilder prey
Than my willing heart to-day!

Hunter Boy! with belt and bow,
Bide with me, or let me go,
An thou wilt, in wake of thee,
Questing for my mine infancy!
With thy glad face in the sun,
Let thy laughter overrun
Thy ripe lips, until mine own
Answer, ringing, tone for tone!

O my Hunter! tilt the cup
Of thy silver bugle up,
And like wine pour out for me
All its limpid melody!
Pout thy happy lips and blare
Music's kisses everywhere—
Whiff o'er forest, field and town,
Tufts of tune like thistle-down!
O to go, as once I could,
Hunter Boy of Hazelwood!

124 *The Whitheraways*

(*Set Sail, October* 15, 1890)

THE Whitheraways!—That's what I'll have to cal
You—sailing off, with never a word at all
Of parting!—sailing 'way across the sea,
With never one good-bye to *me*—to ME!

Sailing away from me, with no farewell!—
Ah, Parker Hitt and sister Muriel—
And Rodney, too, and little Laurance—all
Sailing away—just as the leaves, this Fall!

Well, then, *I* too shall sail on cheerily
As now you all go sailing o'er the sea:
I've *other* little friends with me on shore—
Though they but make me yearn for *you* the more!

And so, sometime, dear little friends afar,
When this faint voice shall reach you, and you are
All just a little homesick, you must be
As brave as I am now, and think of me!

Or, haply, if your eyes, as mine, droop low,
And would be humored with a tear or so,—
Go to your *Parents,* Children!—let *them* do
The *crying*—'twill be easier for them to!

125 *The Orchard Lands of Long Ago*

THE orchard lands of Long Ago!
O drowsy winds, awake, and blow
The snowy blossoms back to me,
And all the buds that used to be!
Blow back along the grassy ways
Of truant feet, and lift the haze
Of happy summer from the trees
That trail their tresses in the seas
Of grain that float and overflow
The orchard lands of Long Ago!

Blow back the melody that slips
In lazy laughter from the lips
That marvel much if any kiss
Is sweeter than the apple's is.
Blow back the twitter of the birds—
The lisp, the titter, and the words

Of merriment that found the shine
Of summer-time a glorious wine
That drenched the leaves that loved it so,
In orchard lands of Long Ago!

O memory! alight and sing
Where rosy-bellied pippins cling,
And golden russets glint and gleam,
As, in the old Arabian dream,
The fruits of that enchanted tree
The glad Aladdin robbed for me!
And, drowsy winds, awake and fan
My blood as when it overran
A heart ripe as the apples grow
In orchard lands of Long Ago!

126

A Passing Hail

LET us rest ourselves a bit!
Worry?—wave your hand to it—
Kiss your finger-tips, and smile
It farewell a little while.

Weary of the weary way
We have come from Yesterday,
Let us fret us not, instead,
Of the weary way ahead.

Let us pause and catch our breath
On the hither side of death,

While we see the tender shoots
Of the grasses—not the roots,—

While we yet look down—not up—
To seek out the buttercup
And the daisy where they wave
O'er the green home of the grave.

Let us launch us smoothly on
The soft billows of the lawn,
And drift out across the main
Of our childish dreams again:

Voyage off, beneath the trees,
O'er the field's enchanted seas,
Where the lilies are our sails,
And our sea-gulls, nightingales:

Where no wilder storm shall beat
Than the wind that waves the wheat,
And no tempest-burst above
The old laughs we used to love:

Lose all troubles—gain release,
Languor, and exceeding peace,
Cruising idly o'er the vast,
Calm mid-ocean of the Past.

Let us rest ourselves a bit!
Worry?—Wave your hand to it—
Kiss your finger-tips, and smile
It farewell a little while.

127 *Envoy*

MANY pleasures of Youth have been buoyantly sung
And, borne on the winds of delight, may they beat
With their palpitant wings at the hearts of the Young
And in bosoms of Age find as warm a retreat!—
Yet sweetest of all of the musical throng,
Though least of the numbers that upward aspire
Is the one rising now into wavering song,
As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

'Tis a Winter long dead that beleaguers my door
And muffles his steps in the snows of the past:
And I see, in the embers I'm dreaming before,
Lost faces of love as they looked on me last:—
The round, laughing eyes of the desk-mate of old
Gleam out for a moment with truant desire—
Then fade and are lost in a City of Gold,
As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

And then comes the face, peering back in my own
Of a shy little girl, with her lids drooping low.
As she faltering tells, in a far away tone,
The ghost of a story of long, long ago.—
Then her dewy blue eyes they are lifted again.
But I see their glad light slowly fail and expire,
As I reach and cry to her in vain, all in vain!—
As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

Then the face of a Mother looks back, through the mist
Of the tears that are welling; and, lucent with light,
I see the dear smile of the lips I have kissed
As she knelt by my cradle at morning and night:

And my arms are outheld, with a yearning too wild
For any but God in His love to inspire,
As she pleads at the foot of His throne for her child,—
As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

O pathos of rapture! O glorious pain!
My heart is a blossom of joy overrun
With a shower of tears, as a lily with rain
That weeps in the shadow and laughs in the sun.
The blight of the frost may descend on the tree,
And the leaf and the flower may fall and expire,
But ever and ever love blossoms for me,
As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

GREEN FIELDS AND RUNNING BROOKS

128 *A Country Pathway*

I COME upon it suddenly, alone—
A little pathway winding in the weeds
That fringe the roadside; and with dreams my own,
I wander as it leads.

Full wistfully along the slender way,
Through summer tan of freckled shade and shine,
I take the path that leads me as it may—
Its every choice is mine.

A chipmunk, or a sudden-whirring quail,
Is startled by my step as on I fare—
A garter-snake across the dusty trail
Glances and—is not there.

Above the arching jimson-weeds flare twos
And twos of sallow-yellow butterflies,
Like blooms of lorn primroses blowing loose
When autumn winds arise.

The trail dips—dwindles—broadens then, and lifts
Itself astride a cross-road dubiously,
And, from the fennel marge beyond it, drifts
Still onward, beckoning me.

And though it needs must lure me mile on mile
  Out of the public highway, still I go,
My thoughts, far in advance in Indian-file,
  Allure me even so.

Why, I am as a long-lost boy that went
  At dusk to bring the cattle to the bars,
And was not found again, though Heaven lent
  His mother all the stars

With which to seek him through that awful night.
  O years of nights as vain!—Stars never rise
But well might miss their glitter in the light
  Of tears in mother-eyes!

So—on, with quickened breaths, I follow still—
  My avant-courier must be obeyed!
Thus am I led, and thus the path, at will,
  Invites me to invade

A meadow's precincts, where my daring guide
  Clambers the steps of an old-fashioned stile,
And stumbles down again, the other side,
  To gambol there awhile

In pranks of hide-and-seek, as on ahead
  I see it running, while the clover-stalks
Shake rosy fists at me, as though they said—
  "You dog our country-walks

"And mutilate us with your walking-stick!—
We will not suffer tamely what you do,
And warn you at your peril,—for we'll sic
Our bumblebees on you!"

But I smile back, in airy nonchalance,—
The more determined on my wayward quest,
As some bright memory a moment dawns
A morning in my breast—

Sending a thrill that hurries me along
In faulty similes of childish skips,
Enthused with lithe contortions of a song
Performing on my lips.

In wild meanderings o'er pasture wealth—
Erratic wanderings through dead'ning-lands,
Where sly old brambles, plucking me by stealth,
Put berries in my hands:

Or the path climbs a boulder—wades a slough
Or, rollicking through buttercups and flags,
Goes gaily dancing o'er a deep bayou
On old tree-trunks and snags:

Or, at the creek, leads o'er a limpid pool
Upon a bridge the stream itself has made,
With some Spring-freshet for the mighty tool
That its foundation laid.

I pause a moment here to bend and muse,
With dreamy eyes, on my reflection, where
A boat-backed bug drifts on a helpless cruise,
Or wildly oars the air,

As, dimly seen, the pirate of the brook—
The pike, whose jaunty hulk denotes his speed—
Swings pivoting about, with wary look
Of low and cunning greed.

Till, filled with other thought, I turn again
To where the pathway enters in a realm
Of lordly woodland, under sovereign reign
Of towering oak and elm.

A puritanic quiet here reviles
The almost whispered warble from the hedge,
And takes a locust's rasping voice and files
The silence to an edge.

In such a solitude my somber way
Strays like a misanthrope within a gloom
Of his own shadows—till the perfect day
Bursts into sudden bloom,

And crowns a long, declining stretch of space,
Where King Corn's armies lie with flags unfurled,
And where the valley's dint in Nature's face
Dimples a smiling world.

And lo! through mists that may not be dispelled,
I see an old farm homestead, as in dreams,
Where, like a gem in costly setting held,
The old log cabin gleams.

. . . . . .

O darling Pathway! lead me bravely on
Adown your valley-way, and run before
Among the roses crowding up the lawn
And thronging at the door,—

And carry up the echo there that shall
Arouse the drowsy dog, that he may bay
The household out to greet the prodigal
That wanders home to-day.

129 *Judith*

OHER eyes are amber-fine—
Dark and deep as wells of wine,
While her smile is like the noon
Splendor of a day of June.
If she sorrow—lo! her face
It is like a flowery space
In bright meadows, overlaid
With light clouds and lulled with shade.
If she laugh—it is a trill
Of the wayward whippoorwill
Over upland pastures, heard
Echoed by the mocking-bird

In dim thickets dense with bloom
And blurred cloyings of perfume.
If she sigh—a zephyr swells
Over odorous asphodels
And wan lilies in lush plots
Of moon-drown'd forget-me-nots.
Then, the soft touch of her hand—
Takes all breath to understand
What to liken it thereto!—
Never roseleaf rinsed with dew
Might slip soother-suave than slips
Her slow palm, the while her lips
Swoon through mine, with kiss on kiss
Sweet as heated honey is.

130 *John Brown*

WRIT in between the lines of his life-deed
We trace the sacred service of a heart
Answering the Divine command, in every part
Bearing on human weal: His love did feed
The loveless; and his gentle hands did lead
The blind, and lift the weak, and balm the smart
Of other wounds than rankled at the dart
In his own breast, that gloried thus to bleed.
He served the lowliest first—nay, them alone—
The most despisèd that e'er wreaked vain breath
In cries of suppliance in the reign whereat
Red Guilt sate squat upon her spattered throne.—
For these doomed there it was he went to death.
God! how the merest man loves one like that!

131

Where-Away

O THE Lands of Where-Away!
Tell us—tell us—where are they?
Through the darkness and the dawn
We have journeyed on and on—
From the cradle to the cross—
From possession unto loss.—
Seeking still, from day to day,
For the lands of Where-Away.

When our baby-feet were first
Planted where the daisies burst,
And the greenest grasses grew
In the fields we wandered through,—
On, with childish discontent,
Ever on and on we went,
Hoping still to pass, some day,
O'er the verge of Where-Away.

Roses laid their velvet lips
On our own, with fragrant sips;
But their kisses held us not,
All their sweetness we forgot;—
Though the brambles in our track
Plucked at us to hold us back—
"Just ahead," we used to say,
"Lie the Lands of Where-Away."

Children at the pasture-bars,
Through the dusk, like glimmering stars,
Waved their hands that we should bide
With them over eventide:

Down the dark their voices failed
Falteringly, as they hailed,
And died into yesterday—
Night ahead and—Where-Away?

Twining arms about us thrown—
Warm caresses, all our own,
Can but stay us for a spell—
Love hath little new to tell
To the soul in need supreme,
Aching ever with the dream
Of the endless bliss it may
Find in Lands of Where-Away!

132 *Being His Mother*

BEING his mother,—when he goes away
I would not hold him overlong, and so
Sometimes my yielding sight of him grows O
So quick of tears, I joy he did not stay
To catch the faintest rumor of them! Nay,
Leave always his eyes clear and glad, although
Mine own, dear Lord, do fill to overflow;
Let his remembered features, as I pray,
Smile ever on me! Ah! what stress of love
Thou givest me to guard with Thee thiswise:
Its fullest speech ever to be denied,
Mine own—being his mother! All thereof
Thou knowest only, looking from the skies
As when not Christ alone was crucified,

133 *A Water-Color*

LOW hidden in among the forest-trees
An artist's tilted easel, ankle-deep
In touseled ferns and mosses, and in these
A fluffy water-spaniel, half asleep
Beside a sketch-book and a fallen hat—
A little wicker flask tossed into that.

A sense of utter carelessness and grace
Of pure abandon in the slumb'rous scene,—
As if the June, all hoydenish of face,
Had romped herself to sleep there on the green
And brink and sagging bridge and sliding stream
Were just romantic parcels of her dream.

134 *The Old Year and the New*

I

AS one in sorrow looks upon
The dead face of a loyal friend,
By the dim light of New Year's dawn
I saw the Old Year end.

Upon the pallid features lay
The dear old smile—so warm and bright
Ere thus its cheer had died away
In ashes of delight.

The hands that I had learned to love
With strength of passion half divine,
Were folded now, all heedless of
The emptiness of mine.

The eyes that once had shed their bright
Sweet looks like sunshine, now were dull,
And ever lidded from the light
That made them beautiful.

II

The chimes of bells were in the air,
And sounds of mirth in hall and street,
With pealing laughter everywhere
And throb of dancing feet:

The mirth and the convivial din
Of revelers in wanton glee,
With tunes of harp and violin
In tangled harmony.

But with a sense of nameless dread,
I turned me, from the merry face
Of this newcomer, to my dead;
And, kneeling there a space,

I sobbed aloud, all tearfully:—
By this dear face so fixed and cold,
O Lord, let not this New Year be
As happy as the old!

135 *North and South*

OF the North I wove a dream,
All bespangled with the gleam
Of the glancing wings of swallows
Dipping ripples in a stream,
That, like a tide of wine,
Wound through lands of shade and shine
Where purple grapes hung bursting on the vine.

And where orchard-boughs were bent
Till their tawny fruitage blent
With the golden wake that marked the
Way the happy reapers went;
Where the dawn died into noon
As the May-mists into June,
And the dusk fell like a sweet face in a swoon.

Of the South I dreamed: And there
Came a vision clear and fair
As the marvelous enchantments
Of the mirage of the air;
And I saw the bayou-trees,
With their lavish draperies,
Hang heavy o'er the moon-washed cypress knees.

Peering from lush fens of rice,
I beheld the Negro's eyes,
Lit with that old superstition
Death itself can not disguise;
And I saw the palm-tree nod
Like an Oriental god,
And the cotton froth and bubble from the pod

And I dreamed that North and South,
With a sigh of dew and drouth,
Blew each unto the other
The salute of lip and mouth;
And I wakened, awed and thrilled—
Every doubting murmur stilled
In the silence of the dream I found fulfilled.

136 *Blind*

YOU think it is a sorry thing
That I am blind. Your pitying
Is welcome to me; yet indeed,
I think I have but little need
Of it. Though you may marvel much
That *we*, who see by sense of touch
And taste and hearing, see things *you*
May never look upon; and true
Is it that even in the scent
Of blossoms *we* find something meant
No eyes have in their faces read,
Or wept to see interpreted.

And you might think it strange if now
I told you you were smiling. How
Do I know that? I hold your hand—
Its language I can understand—
Give both to me, and I will show
You many other things I know.
Listen: We never met before
Till now?—Well, you are something lower

Than five-feet-eight in height; and you
Are slender; and your eyes are blue—
Your mother's eyes—your mother's hair—
Your mother's likeness everywhere
Save in your walk—and that is quite
Your father's; nervous.—Am I right?
I thought so. And you used to sing,
But have neglected everything
Of vocalism—though you may
Still thrum on the guitar, and play
A little on the violin,—
I know that by the callous in
The finger-tips of your left hand—
And, by-the-by, though nature planned
You as most men, you are, I see,
"*Left*-handed," too,—the mystery
Is clear, though,—your right arm has been
Broken, to "break" the left one in.
And so, you see, though blind of sight,
I still have ways of seeing quite
Too well for you to sympathize
Excessively, with your good eyes.—
Though *once*, perhaps, to be sincere,
Within the whole asylum here,
From cupola to basement hall,
I was the blindest of them all!

Let us move farther down the walk—
The man here waiting hears my talk,
And is disturbed; besides, he may
Not be quite friendly anyway.

In fact—(this will be far enough;
Sit down)—the man just spoken of
Was once a friend of mine. He came
For treatment here from Burlingame—
A rich though brilliant student there,
Who read his eyes out of repair,
And groped his way up here, where we
Became acquainted, and where he
Met one of our girl-teachers, and,
If you'll believe me, asked her hand
In marriage, though the girl was blind
As I am—and the girl *declined*.
Odd, wasn't it? Look, you can see
Him waiting there. Fine, isn't he?
And handsome, eloquently wide
And high of brow, and dignified
With every outward grace, his sight
Restored to him, clear and bright
As day-dawn; waiting, waiting still
For the blind girl that never will
Be wife of his. How do I know?
You will recall a while ago
I told you he and I were friends.
In all that friendship comprehends,
I *was* his friend, I swear! why, now,
Remembering his love, and how
His confidence was all my own,
I hear, in fancy, the low tone
Of his deep voice, so full of pride
And passion, yet so pacified
With his affliction, that it seems
An utterance sent out of dreams

Of saddest melody, withal
So sorrowfully musical
It was, and is, must ever be—
But I'm digressing, pardon me.
I knew not anything of love
In those days, but of that above
All worldly passion,—for my art—
Music,—and that, with all my heart
And soul, blent in a love too great
For words of mine to estimate.
And though among my pupils she
Whose love my friend sought came to me,
I only knew her fingers' touch
Because they loitered overmuch
In simple scales, and needs must be
Untangled almost constantly.
But she was bright in other ways,
And quick of thought; with ready plays
Of wit, and with a voice as sweet
To listen to as one might meet
In any oratorio—
And once I gravely told her so,—
And, at my words, her limpid tone
Of laughter faltered to a moan,
And fell from that into a sigh
That quavered all so wearily,
That I, without the tear that crept
Between the keys, had known she wept;
And yet the hand I reached for then
She caught away, and laughed again.
And when that evening I strolled
With my old friend, I, smiling, told

Him I believed the girl and he
Were matched and mated perfectly:
He was so noble; she, so fair
Of speech, and womanly of air;
He, strong, ambitious; she, as mild
And artless even as a child;
And with a nature, I was sure,
As worshipful as it was pure
And sweet, and brimmed with tender things
Beyond his rarest fancyings.
He stopped me solemnly. He knew,
He said, how good, and just, and true
Was all I said of her; but as
For his own virtues, let them pass,
Since they were nothing to the one
That he had set his heart upon;
For but that morning she had turned
Forever from him. Then I learned
That for a month he had delayed
His going from us, with no aid
Of hope to hold him,—meeting still
Her ever-firm denial, till
Not even in his new-found sight
He found one comfort or delight.
And as his voice broke there, I felt
The brother-heart within me melt
In warm compassion for his own
That throbbed so utterly alone.
And then a sudden fancy hit
Along my brain; and coupling it
With a belief that I, indeed,
Might help my friend in his great need,

I warmly said that I would go
Myself, if he decided so,
And see her for him—that I knew
My pleadings would be listened to
Most seriously, and that she
Should love him, listening to me.
Go; bless me! And that was the last—
The last time his warm hand shut fast
Within my own—so empty since,
That the remembered finger-prints
I've kissed a thousand times, and wet
Them with the tears of all regret!

I know not how to rightly tell
How fared my quest, and what befell
Me, coming in the presence of
That blind girl, and her blinder love.
I know but little else than that
Above the chair in which she sat
I leant—reached for, and found her hand,
And held it for a moment, and
Took up the other—held them both—
As might a friend, I will take oath:
Spoke leisurely, as might a man
Praying for no thing other than
He thinks Heaven's justice:—She was blind,
I said, and yet a noble mind
Most truly loved her; one whose fond
Clear-sighted vision looked beyond
The bounds of her infirmity,
And saw the woman, perfectly

Modeled, and wrought out pure and true
And lovable. She quailed, and drew
Her hands away, but closer still
I caught them. "Rack me as you will!"
She cried out sharply—"Call me 'blind'—
Love ever is—I am resigned!
Blind is your friend; as blind as he
Am I—but blindest of the three—
Yea, blind as death—you will not see
My love for you is killing me!"

There is a memory that may
Not ever wholly fade away
From out my heart, so bright and fair
The light of it still glimmers there.
Why, it did seem as though my sight
Flamed back upon me, dazzling white
And godlike. Not one other word
Of hers I listened for or heard,
But I *saw* songs sung in her eyes
Till they did swoon up drowning-wise,
As my mad lips did strike her own,
And we flashed one, and one alone!
Ah! was it treachery for me
To kneel there, drinking eagerly
That torrent-flow of words that swept
Out laughingly the tears she wept?—
Sweet words! O sweeter far, maybe,
Than light of day to those that see,—
God knows, who did the rapture send
To me, and hold it from my friend.

And we were married half a year
Ago.—And he is—waiting here,
Heedless of that—or anything,
But just that he is lingering
To say good-bye to her, and bow—
As you may see him doing now,—
For there's her footstep in the hall;
God bless her!—help him!—save us all!

137 *To Hear Her Sing*

TO hear her sing—to hear her sing—
It is to hear the birds of Spring
In dewy groves on blooming sprays
Pour out their blithest roundelays.

It is to hear the robin trill
At morning, or the whippoorwill
At dusk, when stars are blossoming—
To hear her sing—to hear her sing!

To hear her sing—it is to hear
The laugh of childhood ringing clear
In woody path or grassy lane
Our feet may never fare again.

Faint, far away as Memory dwells,
It is to hear the village bells
At twilight, as the truant hears
Them, hastening home, with smiles and tears.

Such joy it is to hear her sing,
We fall in love with everything—
The simple things of every day
Grow lovelier than words can say.

The idle brooks that purl across
The gleaming pebbles and the moss
We love no less than classic streams—
The Rhines and Arnos of our dreams.

To hear her sing—with folded eyes,
It is, beneath Venetian skies,
To hear the gondoliers' refrain,
Or troubadours of sunny Spain.—

To hear the bulbul's voice that shook
The throat that trilled for Lalla Rookh:
What wonder we in homage bring
Our hearts to her—to hear her sing!

138 *The Hereafter*

HEREAFTER! O we need not waste
Our smiles or tears, whate'er befall:
No happiness but holds a taste
Of something sweeter, after all;—
No depth of agony but feels
Some fragment of abiding trust,—
Whatever Death unlocks or seals,
The mute beyond is just.

139 While the Musician Played

O IT was but a dream I had
While the musician played!—
And here the sky, and here the glad
Old ocean kissed the glade;
And here the laughing ripples ran,
And here the roses grew
That threw a kiss to every man
That voyaged with the crew.

Our silken sails in lazy folds
Drooped in the breathless breeze:
As o'er a field of marigolds
Our eyes swam o'er the seas;
While here the eddies lisped and purled
Around the island's rim,
And up from out the underworld
We saw the mermen swim.

And it was dawn and middle-day
And midnight—for the moon
On silver rounds across the bay
Had climbed the skies of June,
And there the glowing, glorious king
Of day ruled o'er his realm,
With stars of midnight glittering
About his diadem.

The sea-gull reeled on languid wing
In circles round the mast,
We heard the songs the sirens sing
As we went sailing past;

And up and down the golden sands
A thousand fairy throngs
Flung at us from their flashing hands
The echoes of their songs.

O it was but a dream I had
While the musician played!—
For here the sky, and here the glad
Old ocean kissed the glade;
And here the laughing ripples ran,
And here the roses grew
That threw a kiss to every man
That voyaged with the crew.

140 *The Iron Horse*

NO song is mine of Arab steed—
My courser is of nobler blood,
And cleaner limb and fleeter speed,
And greater strength and hardihood
Than ever cantered wild and free
Across the plains of Araby.

Go search the level desert-land
From Sana on to Samarcand—
Wherever Persian prince has been
Or Dervish, Sheik or Bedouin,
And I defy you there to point
Me out a steed the half so fine—
From tip of ear to pastern-joint—
As this old iron horse of mine.

You do not know what beauty is—
  You do not know what gentleness
  His answer is to my caress!—
Why, look upon this gait of his,—
A touch upon his iron rein—
  He moves with such a stately grace
The sunlight on his burnished mane
  Is barely shaken in its place;
  And at a touch he changes pace,
And, gliding backward, stops again.

And talk of mettle—Ah! my friend,
  Such passion smoulders in his breast
That when awakened it will send
  A thrill of rapture wilder than
  Ere palpitated heart of man
  When flaming at its mightiest.
And there's a fierceness in his ire—
  A maddened majesty that leaps
Along his veins in blood of fire,
  Until the path his vision sweeps
Spins out behind him like a thread
  Unraveled from the reel of time,
  As, wheeling on his course sublime,
The earth revolves beneath his tread.

Then stretch away, my gallant steed!
  Thy mission is a noble one:
  Thou bear'st the father to the son,
And sweet relief to bitter need;
Thou bear'st the stranger to his friends:
  Thou bear'st the pilgrim to the shrine.

And back again the prayer he sends
  That God will prosper me and mine,—
The star that on thy forehead gleams
Has blossomed in our brightest dreams.
Then speed thee on thy glorious race!
The mother waits thy ringing pace;
The father leans an anxious ear
The thunder of thy hooves to hear;
The lover listens, far away,
To catch thy keen exultant neigh;
And, where thy breathings roll and rise,
The husband strains his eager eyes,
And laugh of wife and baby-glee
Ring out to greet and welcome thee.
Then stretch away! and when at last
  The master's hand shall gently check
Thy mighty speed, and hold thee fast,
  The world will pat thee on the neck.

141 *The Plaint Human*

SEASON of snows, and season of flowers,
  Seasons of loss and gain!—
Since grief and joy must alike be ours,
  Why do we still complain?

Ever our failing, from sun to sun,
  O my intolerant brother:—
We want just a little too little of one,
  And much too much of the other.

142 *The Quarrel*

THEY faced each other: Topaz-brown
And lambent burnt her eyes and shot
Sharp flame at his of amethyst.—
"I hate you! Go, and be forgot
As death forgets!" their glitter *hissed*
(So *seemed* it) in their hatred. Ho!
Dared any mortal front her so?—
Tempestuous eyebrows knitted down—
Tense nostril, mouth—no muscle slack,—
And black—the suffocating black—
The stifling blackness of her frown!

Ah! but the lifted face of her!
And the twitched lip and tilted head!
Yet he did neither wince nor stir,—
Only—his hands clenched; and, instead
Of words, he answered with a stare
That stammered not in aught it said,
As might his voice if trusted there.

And what—what spake his steady gaze?—
Was there a look that harshly fell
To scoff her?—or a syllable
Of anger?—or the bitter phrase
That myrrhs the honey of love's lips,
Or curdles blood as poison-drips?
What made their breasts to heave and swell
As billows under bows of ships
In broken seas on stormy days?
We may not know—nor *they* indeed—
What mercy found them in their need.

A sudden sunlight smote the gloom;
And round about them swept a breeze,
With faint breaths as of clover-bloom;
A bird was heard, through drone of bees,—
Then, far and clear and eerily,
A child's voice from an orchard-tree—
Then laughter, sweet as the perfume
Of lilacs, could the hearing see.
And he—O Love! he fed thy name
On bruised kisses, while her dim
Deep eyes, with all their inner flame,
Like drowning gems were turned on him.

143

His Vigil

CLOSE the book and dim the light,
I shall read no more to-night.
No—I am not sleepy, dear—
Do not go: sit by me here
In the darkness and the deep
Silence of the watch I keep.
Something in your presence so
Soothes me—as in long ago
I first felt your hand—as now—
In the darkness touch my brow:
I've no other wish than you
Thus should fold mine eyelids to,
Saying naught of sigh or tear—
Just as God were sitting here.

144 *Tom Van Arden*

TOM VAN ARDEN, my old friend,
Our warm fellowship is one
Far too old to comprehend
Where its bond was first begun:
Mirage-like before my gaze
Gleams a land of other days,
Where two truant boys, astray,
Dream their lazy lives away.

There's a vision, in the guise
Of Midsummer, where the Past
Like a weary beggar lies
In the shadow Time has cast;
And as blends the bloom of trees
With the drowsy hum of bees,
Fragrant thoughts and murmurs blend,
Tom Van Arden, my old friend.

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,
All the pleasures we have known
Thrill me now as I extend
This old hand and grasp your own—
Feeling, in the rude caress,
All affection's tenderness;
Feeling, though the touch be rough,
Our old souls are soft enough.

So we'll make a mellow hour:
Fill your pipe, and taste the wine—
Warp your face, if it be sour,
I can spare a smile from mine;

If it sharpen up your wit,
Let me feel the edge of it—
I have eager ears to lend,
Tom Van Arden, my old friend.

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,
Are we "lucky dogs," indeed?
Are we all that we pretend
In the jolly life we lead?—
Bachelors, we must confess,
Boast of "single blessedness"
To the world, but not alone—
Man's best sorrow is his own!

And the saddest truth is this,—
Life to us has never proved
What we tasted in the kiss
Of the women we have loved:
Vainly we congratulate
Our escape from such a fate
As their lying lips could send,
Tom Van Arden, my old friend!

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,
Hearts, like fruit upon the stem,
Ripen sweetest, I contend,
As the frost falls over them:
Your regard for me to-day
Makes November taste of May,
And through every vein of rhyme
Pours the blood of summer-time.

When our souls are cramped with youth
  Happiness seems far away
In the future, while, in truth,
  We look back on it to-day
    Through our tears, nor dare to boast,—
    "Better to have loved and lost!"
    Broken hearts are hard to mend,
    Tom Van Arden, my old friend.

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,
  I grow prosy, and you tire;
Fill the glasses while I bend
  To prod up the failing fire . . .
    You are restless:—I presume
    There's a dampness in the room,—
    Much of warmth our nature begs,
    With rheumatics in our legs!...

Humph! the legs we used to fling
  Limber-jointed in the dance,
When we heard the fiddle ring
  Up the curtain of Romance,
    And in crowded public halls
    Played with hearts like jugglers' balls.
    Feats of mountebanks, depend!—
    Tom Van Arden, my old friend.

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,
  Pardon, then, this theme of mine:
While the firelight leaps to lend
  Higher color to the wine,—

I propose a health to those
Who have *homes,* and home's repose,
Wife- and child-love without end!
...Tom Van Arden, my old friend.

145 *The Blossoms on the Trees*

BLOSSOMS crimson, white, or blue,
Purple, pink, and every hue,
From sunny skies, to tintings drowned
In dusky drops of dew,
I praise you all, wherever found,
And love you through and through;—
But, Blossoms On The Trees,
With your breath upon the breeze,
There's nothing all the world around
As half as sweet as you!

Could the rhymer only wring
All the sweetness to the lees
Of all the kisses clustering
In juicy Used-to-bes,
To dip his rhymes therein and sing
The blossoms on the trees,—
"O Blossoms on the Trees,"
He would twitter, trill, and coo,
"However sweet, such songs as these
Are not as sweet as you:—
For you are *blooming* melodies
The *eyes* may listen to!"

146 *Her Beautiful Eyes*

O HER beautiful eyes! they are as blue as the dew
On the violet's bloom when the morning is new,
And the light of their love is the gleam of the sun
O'er the meadows of Spring where the quick shadows run:
As the morn shifts the mists and the clouds from the skies—
So I stand in the dawn of her beautiful eyes.

And her beautiful eyes are as mid-day to me,
When the lily-bell bends with the weight of the bee,
And the throat of the thrush is a-pulse in the heat,
And the senses are drugged with the subtle and sweet
And delirious breaths of the air's lullabies—
So I swoon in the noon of her beautiful eyes.

O her beautiful eyes! they have smitten mine own
As a glory glanced down from the glare of The Throne;
And I reel, and I falter and fall, as afar
Fell the shepherds that looked on the mystical Star,
And yet dazed in the tidings that bade them arise—
So I grope through the night of her beautiful eyes.

147 *Home at Night*

WHEN chirping crickets fainter cry,
And pale stars blossom in the sky,
And twilight's gloom has dimmed the bloom
And blurred the butterfly:

When locust-blossoms fleck the walk,
And up the tiger-lily stalk
The glow-worm crawls and clings and falls
And glimmers down the garden-walls:

When buzzing things, with double wings
Of crisp and raspish flutterings,
Go whizzing by so very nigh
One thinks of fangs and stings:—

O then, within, is stilled the din
Of crib she rocks the baby in,
And heart and gate and latch's weight
Are lifted—and the lips of Kate.

148 *Just to be Good*

JUST to be good—
This is enough—enough!
O we who find sin's billows wild and rough,
Do we not feel how more than any gold
Would be the blameless life we led of old
While yet our lips knew but a mother's kiss?
Ah! though we miss
All else but this,
To be good is enough!

It is enough—
Enough—just to be good!
To lift our hearts where they are understood;
To let the thirst for worldly power and place
Go unappeased; to smile back in God's face
With the glad lips our mothers used to kiss.
Ah! though we miss
All else but this,
To be good is enough!

149 *Autumn*

AS a harvester, at dusk,
Faring down some woody trail
Leading homeward through the musk
Of May-apple and pawpaw,
Hazel-bush, and spice and haw,—
So comes Autumn, swart and hale,
Drooped of frame and slow of stride,
But withal an air of pride
Looming up in stature far
Higher than his shoulders are;
Weary both in arm and limb,
Yet the wholesome heart of him
Sheer at rest and satisfied.

Greet him as with glee of drums
And glad cymbals, as he comes!
Robe him fair, O Rain and Shine!
He the Emperor—the King—
Royal lord of everything
Sagging Plenty's granary floors
And out-bulging all her doors;
He the god of corn and wine,
Honey, milk, and fruit and oil—
Lord of feast, as lord of toil—
Jocund host of yours and mine!

Ho! the revel of his laugh!—
Half is sound of winds, and half
Roar of ruddy blazes drawn
Up the throats of chimneys wide,
Circling which, from side to side,

Faces—lit as by the Dawn,
With her highest tintings on
Tip of nose, and cheek, and chin—
Smile at some old fairy-tale
Of enchanted lovers, in
Silken gown and coat of mail,
With a retinue of elves
Merry as their very selves,
Trooping ever, hand in hand,
Down the dales of Wonderland.

Then the glory of his song!—
Lifting up his dreamy eyes—
Singing haze across the skies;
Singing clouds that trail along
Towering tops of trees that seize
Tufts of them to stanch the breeze;
Singing slanted strands of rain
In between the sky and earth,
For the lyre to mate the mirth
And the might of his refrain:
Singing southward-flying birds
Down to us, and afterwards
Singing them to flight again:
Singing blushes to the cheeks
Of the leaves upon the trees—
Singing on and changing these
Into pallor, slowly wrought,
Till the little, moaning creeks
Bear them to their last farewell,
As Elaine, the lovable,

Was borne down to Lancelot.—
Singing drip of tears, and then
Drying them with smiles again.

Singing apple, peach and grape,
Into roundest, plumpest shape;
Rosy ripeness to the face
Of the pippin; and the grace
Of the dainty stamin-tip
To the huge bulk of the pear,
Pendant in the green caress
Of the leaves, and glowing through
With the tawny laziness
Of the gold that Ophir knew,—
Haply, too, within its rind
Such a cleft as bees may find,
Bungling on it half aware,
And wherein to see them sip,
Fancy lifts an oozy lip,
And the singer's falter there.

Sweet as swallows swimming through
Eddyings of dusk and dew,
Singing happy scenes of home
Back to sight of eager eyes
That have longed for them to come,
Till their coming is surprise
Uttered only by the rush
Of quick tears and prayerful hush:
Singing on, in clearer key,
Hearty palms of you and me
Into grasps that tingle still
Rapturous, and ever will!

Singing twank and twang of strings—
Trill of flute and clarinet
In a melody that rings
Like the tunes we used to play,
And our dreams are playing yet!
Singing lovers, long astray,
Each to each; and, sweeter things,—
Singing in their marriage-day,
And a banquet holding all
These delights for festival.

150 *Bedouin*

O LOVE is like an untamed steed!—
So hot of heart and wild of speed,
And with fierce freedom so in love,
The desert is not vast enough,
With all its leagues of glimmering sands,
To pasture it! Ah, that my hands
Were more than human in their strength,
That my deft lariat at length
Might safely noose this splendid thing
That so defies all conquering!
Ho! but to see it whirl and reel—
The sands spurt forward—and to feel
The quivering tension of the thong
That throned me high, with shriek and song!
To grapple tufts of tossing mane—
To spurn it to its feet again,
And then, *sans* saddle, rein or bit,
To lash the mad life out of it!

151 Let Us Forget

LET us forget. What matters it that we
Once reigned o'er happy realms of long ago,
And talked of love, and let our voices low,
And ruled for some brief sessions royally?
What if we sung, or laughed, or wept maybe?
It has availed not anything, and so
Let it go by that we may better know
How poor a thing is lost to you and me.
But yesterday I kissed your lips, and yet
Did thrill you not enough to shake the dew
From your drenched lids—and missed, with no regret,
Your kiss shot back, with sharp breaths failing you:
And so, to-day, while our worn eyes are wet
With all this waste of tears, let us forget!

152 Sleep

ORPHANED, I cry to thee:
Sweet Sleep! O kneel and be
A mother unto me!
Calm thou my childish fears:
Fold—fold mine eyelids to, all tenderly,
And dry my tears.

Come, Sleep, all drowsy-eyed
And faint with languor,—slide
Thy dim face down beside
Mine own, and let me rest
And nestle in thy heart, and there abide,
A favored guest.

Good night to every care,
And shadow of despair!
Good night to all things where
Within is no delight!—
Sleep opens her dark arms, and, swooning there,
I sob: Good night—good night!

153 *When Age Comes On*

WHEN Age comes on!—
The deepening dusk is where the dawn
Once glittered splendid, and the dew,
In honey-drips from red rose-lips,
Was kissed away by me and you.—
And now across the frosty lawn
Black footprints trail, and Age comes on—
And Age comes on!
And biting wild-winds whistle through
Our tattered hopes—and Age comes on!

When Age comes on!—
O tide of raptures, long withdrawn,
Flow back in summer floods, and fling
Here at our feet our childhood sweet,
And all the songs we used to sing! . . .
Old loves, old friends—all dead and gone—
Our old faith lost—and Age comes on—
And Age comes on!
Poor hearts! have we not anything
But longings left when Age comes on?

154 *Dan Paine*

OLD friend of mine, whose chiming name
Has been the burthen of a rhyme
Within my heart since first I came
To know thee in thy mellow prime:
With warm emotions in my breast
That can but coldly be expressed,
And hopes and wishes wild and vain,
I reach my hand to thee, Dan Paine.

In fancy, as I sit alone
In gloomy fellowship with care,
I hear again thy cheery tone,
And wheel for thee an easy-chair;
And from my hand the pencil falls—
My book upon the carpet sprawls,
As eager soul and heart and brain
Leap up to welcome thee, Dan Paine.

A something gentle in thy mien,
A something tender in thy voice,
Has made my trouble so serene,
I can but weep, from very choice.
And even then my tears, I guess,
Hold more of sweet than bitterness,
And more of gleaming shine than rain,
Because of thy bright smile, Dan Paine.

The wrinkles that the years have spun
And tangled round thy tawny face,
Are kinked with laughter, every one,
And fashioned in a mirthful grace.

And though the twinkle of thine eyes
Is keen as frost when Summer dies,
It can not long as frost remain
While thy warm soul shines out, Dan Paine.

And so I drain a health to thee:—
May merry Joy and jolly Mirth
Like children clamber on thy knee,
And ride thee round the happy earth!
And when, at last, the hand of Fate
Shall lift the latch of Canaan's gate,
And usher me in thy domain,
Smile on me just as now, Dan Paine.

155 *Their Sweet Sorrow*

THEY meet to say farewell: Their way
Of saying this is hard to say.—
He holds her hand an instant, wholly
Distressed—and she unclasps it slowly.

He bends *his* gaze evasively
Over the printed page that she
Recurs to, with a new-moon shoulder
Glimpsed from the lace-mists that enfold her.

The clock, beneath its crystal cup,
Discreetly clicks—*"Quick! Act! Speak up!"*
A tension circles both her slender
Wrists—and her raised eyes flash in splendor,

Even as he feels his dazzled own.—
Then, blindingly, round either thrown,
They feel a stress of arms that ever
Strain tremblingly and—*"Never! Never!"*

Is whispered brokenly, with half
A sob, like a belated laugh,—
While cloyingly their blurred kiss closes,—
Sweet as the dew's lip to the rose's.

156 *The Old Retired Sea-Captain*

THE old sea-captain has sailed the seas
So long, that the waves at mirth,
Or the waves gone wild, and the crests of these,
Were as near playmates from birth:
He has loved both the storm and the calm, because
They seemed as his brothers twain,—
The flapping sail was his soul's applause,
And his rapture, the roaring main.

But now—like a battered hulk seems he,
Cast high on a foreign strand,
Though he feels "in port," as it need must be,
And the stay of a daughter's hand—
Yet ever the round of the listless hours,—
His pipe, in the languid air—
The grass, the trees, and the garden flowers,
And the strange earth everywhere!

And so betimes he is restless here
In this little inland town,
With never a wing in the atmosphere
But the wind-mill's, up and down;
His daughter's home in this peaceful vale,
And his grandchild 'twixt his knees—
But never the hail of a passing sail,
Nor the surge of the angry seas!

He quits his pipe, and he snaps its neck—
Would speak, though he coughs instead,
Then paces the porch like a quarter-deck
With a reeling mast o'erhead!
Ho! the old sea-captain's cheeks glow warm,
And his eyes gleam grim and weird,
As he mutters about, like a thunder-storm,
In the cloud of his beetling beard.

157 *August*

A DAY of torpor in the sullen heat
Of Summer's passion: In the sluggish stream
The panting cattle lave their lazy feet,
With drowsy eyes, and dream.

Long since the winds have died, and in the sky
There lives no cloud to hint of Nature's grief;
The sun glares ever like an evil eye,
And withers flower and leaf.

Upon the gleaming harvest-field remote
The thresher lies deserted, like some old
Dismantled galleon that hangs afloat
Upon a sea of gold.

The yearning cry of some bewildered bird
Above an empty nest, and truant boys
Along the river's shady margin heard—
A harmony of noise—

A melody of wrangling voices blent
With liquid laughter, and with rippling calls
Of piping lips and trilling echoes sent
To mimic waterfalls.

And through the hazy veil the atmosphere
Has draped about the gleaming face of Day,
The sifted glances of the sun appear
In splinterings of spray.

The dusty highway, like a cloud of dawn,
Trails o'er the hillside, and the passer-by,
A tired ghost in misty shroud, toils on
His journey to the sky.

And down across the valley's drooping sweep,
Withdrawn to farthest limit of the glade,
The forest stands in silence, drinking deep
Its purple wine of shade.

The gossamer floats up on phantom wing;
The sailor-vision voyages the skies
And carries into chaos everything
That freights the weary eyes:

Till, throbbing on and on, the pulse of heat
Increases—reaches—passes fever's height,
And Day sinks into slumber, cool and sweet,
Within the arms of Night.

158 *Go, Winter!*

GO, Winter! Go thy ways! We want again
The twitter of the bluebird and the wren;
Leaves ever greener growing, and the shine
Of Summer's sun—not thine.—

Thy sun, which mocks our need of warmth and love
And all the heartening fervencies thereof,
It scarce hath heat enow to warm our thin
Pathetic yearnings in.

So get thee from us! We are cold, God wot,
Even as *thou* art.—We remember not
How blithe we hailed thy coming.—That was O
Too long—too long ago!

Get from us utterly! Ho! Summer then
Shall spread her grasses where thy snows have been,
And thy last icy footprint melt and mold
In her first marigold.

159 *Donn Piatt of Mac-o-Chee*

I

DONN Piatt—of Mac-o-chee,—
Not the one of History,
Who, with flaming tongue and pen,
Scathes the vanities of men;
Not the one whose biting wit
Cuts pretense and etches it
On the brazen brow that dares
Filch the laurel that it wears:
Not the Donn Piatt whose praise
Echoes in the noisy ways
Of the faction, onward led
By the statesman!—But, instead,
Give the simple man to me,—
Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee!

II

Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee!
Branches of the old oak-tree,
Drape him royally in fine
Purple shade and golden shine!
Emerald plush of sloping lawn
Be the throne he sits upon!
And, O Summer Sunset, thou
Be his crown, and gild a brow
Softly smoothed and soothed and calmed
By the breezes, mellow-palmed
As Erata's white hand agleam
On the forehead of a dream.—
So forever rule o'er me,
Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee!

III

Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee:
Through a lilied memory
Plays the wayward little creek
Round thy home at hide-and-seek—
As I see and hear it, still
Romping round the wooded hill,
Till its laugh-and-babble blends
With the silence while it sends
Glances back to kiss the sight,
In its babyish delight,
Ere it strays amid the gloom
Of the glens that burst in bloom
Of the rarest rhyme for thee,
Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee!

IV

Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee!
What a darling destiny
Has been mine—to meet him there—
Lolling in an easy-chair
On the terrace, while he told
Reminiscences of old—
Letting my cigar die out,
Hearing poems talked about;
And entranced to hear him say
Gentle things of Thackeray,
Dickens, Hawthorne, and the rest,
Known to him as host and guest—
Known to him as he to me—
Donn Piatt of Mac-o-chee!

160 *Longfellow*

THE winds have talked with him confidingly:
The trees have whispered to him; and the night
Hath held him gently as a mother might,
And taught him all sad tones of melody:
The mountains have bowed to him: and the sea,
In clamorous waves, and murmurs exquisite,
Hath told him all her sorrow and delight—
Her legends fair—her darkest mystery.
His verse blooms like a flower, night and day;
Bees cluster round his rhymes: and twitterings
Of lark and swallow, in an endless May,
Are mingling with the tender songs he sings.—
Nor shall he cease to sing—in every lay
Of Nature's noble he sings—and will alway.

161 *The Quiet Lodger*

THE man that rooms next door to me:
Two weeks ago, this very night,
He took possession quietly,
As any other lodger might—
But why the man next mine should so
Attract him I was vexed to know,—
Because his quietude, in fine,
Was far superior to mine.

"Now, I like quiet, truth to tell,
A tranquil life is sweet to me—
But *this*," I sneered, "suits me too well.—
He shuts his door so noiselessly,

And glides about so very mute,
In each mysterious pursuit,
His silence is oppressive, and
Too deep for me to understand."

Sometimes, forgetting book or pen,
I've found my head in breathless poise
Lifted, and dropped in shame again,
Hearing some alien ghost of noise—
Some smothered sound that seemed to be
A trunk-lid dropped unguardedly,
Or the crisp writhings of some quire
Of manuscript thrust in the fire.

Then I have climbed, and closed in vain
My transom, opening in the hall;
Or close against the window-pane
Have pressed my fevered face,—but all
The day or night without held not
A sight or sound or counter-thought
To set my mind one instant free
Of this man's silent mastery.

And often I have paced the floor
With muttering anger, far at night,
Hearing, and cursing, o'er and o'er,
The muffled noises, and the light
And tireless movements of this guest
Whose silence raged above my rest
Hoarser than howling storms at sea—
The man that rooms next door to me.

But twice or thrice, upon the stair,
I've seen his face—most strangely wan,—
Each time upon me unaware
He came—smooth'd past me, and was gone.—
So like a whisper he went by,
I listened after, ear and eye,
Nor could my chafing fancy tell
The meaning of one syllable.

Last night I caught him, face to face,—
He entering his room, and I
Glaring from mine: He paused a space
And met my scowl all shrinkingly,
But with full gentleness: The key
Turned in his door—and I could see
It tremblingly withdrawn and put
Inside, and then—the door was shut.

Then silence. *Silence!*—why, last night
The silence was tumultuous,
And thundered on till broad daylight;—
O never has it stunned me thus!—
It rolls, and moans, and mumbles yet.—
Ah, God! how loud may silence get
When man mocks at a brother man
Who answers but as silence can!

The silence grew, and grew, and grew,
Till at high noon to-day 'twas heard
Throughout the house; and men flocked through
The echoing halls, with faces blurred

With pallor, gloom, and fear, and awe,
And shuddering at what they saw,—
The quiet lodger, as he lay
Stark of the life he cast away.

. . . . . .

So strange to-night—those voices there,
Where all so quiet was before:
They say the face has not a care
Nor sorrow in it any more . . .
His latest scrawl:—"Forgive me—You
Who prayed, 'They know not what they do!'"
My tears will never let me see
This man that rooms next door to me!

162 *The Rival*

I SO loved once, when Death came by I hid
Away my face,
And all my sweetheart's tresses she undid
To make my hiding-place.

The dread shade passed me thus unheeding; and
I turned me then
To calm my love—kiss down her shielding hand
And comfort her again.

And lo! she answered not: And she did sit
All fixedly,
With her fair face and the sweet smile of it,
In love with Death, not me.

163 *A Monument for the Soldiers*

A MONUMENT for the Soldiers!
And what will ye build it of?
Can ye build it of marble, or brass, or bronze,
Outlasting the Soldiers' love?
Can ye glorify it with legends
As grand as their blood hath writ
From the inmost shrine of this land of thine
To the outermost verge of it?

And the answer came: We would build it
Out of our hopes made sure,
And out of our purest prayers and tears,
And out of our faith secure:
We would build it out of the great white truths
Their death hath sanctified,
And the sculptured forms of the men in arms,
And their faces ere they died.

And what heroic figures
Can the sculptor carve in stone?
Can the marble breast be made to bleed,
And the marble lips to moan?
Can the marble brow be fevered?
And the marble eyes be graved
To look their last, as the flag floats past,
On the country they have saved?

And the answer came: The figures
Shall all be fair and brave,
And, as befitting, as pure and white
As the stars above their grave!

The marble lips, and breast and brow
Whereon the laurel lies,
Bequeath us right to guard the flight
Of the old flag in the skies!

A monument for the Soldiers!
Built of a people's love,
And blazoned and decked and panoplied
With the hearts ye build it of!
And see that ye build it stately,
In pillar and niche and gate,
And high in pose as the souls of those
It would commemorate!

164 *The Watches of the Night*

O THE waiting in the watches of the night!
In the darkness, desolation, and contrition and affright;
The awful hush that holds us shut away from all delight:
The ever-weary memory that ever weary goes
Recounting ever over every aching loss it knows—
The ever-weary eyelids gasping ever for repose—
In the dreary, weary watches of the night!

Dark—stifling dark—the watches of the night!
With tingling nerves at tension, how the blackness flashes white
With spectral visitations smitten past the inner sight!—

What shuddering sense of wrongs we've wrought that
may not be redressed—
Of tears we did not brush away—of lips we left un-
pressed,
And hands that we let fall, with all their loyalty un-
guessed!
Ah! the empty, empty watches of the night!

What solace in the watches of the night?—
What frailest staff of hope to stay—what faintest shaft of
light?
Do we *dream,* and dare *believe* it, that by never weight of
right
Of our own poor weak deservings, we shall win the dawn
at last—
Our famished souls find freedom from this penance for
the past,
In a faith that leaps and lightens from the gloom that
flees aghast—
Shall we survive the watches of the night?

One leads us through the watches of the night—
By the ceaseless intercession of our loved ones lost to sight
He is with us through all trials, in His mercy and His
might;—
With our mothers there about Him, all our sorrow dis-
appears,
Till the silence of our sobbing is the prayer the Master
hears,
And His hand is laid upon us with the tenderness of
tears
In the waning of the watches of the night.

165 *My Friend*

"HE is my friend," I said,—
"Be patient!" Overhead
The skies were drear and dim;
And lo! the thought of him
Smiled on my heart—and then
The sun shone out again!

"He is my friend!" The words
Brought summer and the birds;
And all my winter-time
Thawed into running rhyme
And rippled into song,
Warm, tender, brave, and strong.

And so it sings to-day.—
So may it sing alway!
Though waving grasses grow
Between, and lilies blow
Their trills of perfume clear
As laughter to the ear,
Let each mute measure end
With "Still he is thy friend."

166 *The Passing of a Heart*

O TOUCH me with your hands—
For pity's sake!
My brow throbs ever on with such an ache
As only your cool touch may take away;
And so, I pray
You, touch me with your hands!

Touch—touch me with your hands.—
Smooth back the hair
You once caressed, and kissed, and called so fair
That I did dream its gold would wear alway,
And lo, to-day—
O touch me with your hands!

Just touch me with your hands,
And let them press
My weary eyelids with the old caress,
And lull me till I sleep. Then go your way,
That Death may say:
He touched her with his hands.

167 *We to Sigh Instead of Sing*

"RAIN and rain! and rain and rain!"
Yesterday we muttered
Grimly as the grim refrain
That the thunders uttered:
All the heavens under cloud—
All the sunshine sleeping;
All the grasses limply bowed
With their weight of weeping.

Sigh and sigh! and sigh and sigh!
Never end of sighing;
Rain and rain for our reply—
Hopes half-drowned and dying;

Peering through the window-pane,
Naught but endless raining—
Endless sighing, and, as vain,
Endlessly complaining.

Shine and shine! and shine and shine!
Ah! to-day the splendor!—
All this glory yours and mine—
God! but God is tender!
We to sigh instead of sing,
Yesterday, in sorrow,
While the Lord was fashioning
This for our To-morrow!

168 *Suspense*

A WOMAN'S figure, on a ground of night
Inlaid with sallow stars that dimly stare
Down in the lonesome eyes, uplifted there
As in vague hope some alien lance of light
Might pierce their woe. The tears that blind her sight—
The salt and bitter blood of her despair—
Her hands toss back through torrents of her hair
And grip toward God with anguish infinite.
And O the carven mouth, with all its great
Intensity of longing frozen fast
In such a smile as well may designate
The slowly murdered heart, that, to the last,
Conceals each newer wound, and back at Fate
Throbs Love's eternal lie—"Lo, I can wait!"

169 *John McKeen*

JOHN McKEEN, in his rusty dress,
His loosened collar, and swarthy throat,
His face unshaven, and none the less,
His hearty laugh and his wholesomeness,
And the wealth of a workman's vote!

Bring him, O Memory, here once more,
And tilt him back in his Windsor chair
By the kitchen stove, when the day is o'er
And the light of the hearth is across the floor,
And the crickets everywhere!

And let their voices be gladly blent
With a watery jingle of pans and spoons,
And a motherly chirrup of sweet content,
And neighborly gossip and merriment,
And old-time fiddle-tunes!

Tick the clock with a wooden sound,
And fill the hearing with childish glee
Of rhyming riddle, or story found
In the Robinson Crusoe, leather-bound
Old book of the Used-to-be!

John McKeen of the Past! Ah, John,
To have grown ambitious in worldly ways!—
To have rolled your shirt-sleeves down, to don
A broadcloth suit, and, forgetful, gone
Out on election days!

John, ah, John! did it prove your worth
To yield you the office you still maintain?—

To fill your pockets, but leave the dearth
Of all the happier things on earth
  To the hunger of heart and brain?

Under the dusk of your villa trees,
  Edging the drives where your blooded span
Paw the pebbles and wait your ease,—
Where are the children about your knees,
  And the mirth, and the happy man?

The blinds of your mansion are battened to;
  Your faded wife is a close recluse;
And your "finished" daughters will doubtless do
Dutifully all that is willed of you,
  And marry as you shall choose!—

But O for the old-home voices, blent
  With the watery jingle of pans and spoons,
And the motherly chirrup of glad content,
And neighborly gossip and merriment,
  And the old-time fiddle-tunes!

170 *At Utter Loaf*

AN afternoon as ripe with heat
  As might the golden pippin be
With mellowness if at my feet
  It dropped now from the apple-tree
  My hammock swings in lazily.

The boughs about me spread a shade
  That shields me from the sun, but weaves
  With breezy shuttles through the leaves
Blue rifts of skies, to gleam and fade
  Upon the eyes that only see
  Just of themselves, all drowsily.

Above me drifts the fallen skein
  Of some tired spider, looped and blown,
As fragile as a strand of rain,
  Across the air, and upward thrown
  By breaths of hay-fields newly mown—
So glimmering it is and fine,
I doubt these drowsy eyes of mine.

Far-off and faint as voices pent
  In mines, and heard from underground,
Come murmurs as of discontent,
  And clamorings of sullen sound
The city sends me, as, I guess,
To vex me, though they do but bless
Me in my drowsy fastnesses.

I have no care. I only know
  My hammock hides and holds me here
  In lands of shade a prisoner:
While lazily the breezes blow
  Light leaves of sunshine over me,
And back and forth and to and fro
  I swing, enwrapped in some hushed glee,
  Smiling at all things drowsily.

171 *September Dark*

THE air falls chill;
The whippoorwill
Pipes lonesomely behind the hill:
The dusk grows dense,
The silence tense;
And lo, the katydids commence.

Through shadowy rifts
Of woodland, lifts
The low, slow moon, and upward drifts,
While left and right
The fireflies' light
Swirls eddying in the skirts of Night.

O Cloudland, gray
And level, lay
Thy mists across the face of Day!
At foot and head,
Above the dead,
O Dews, weep on uncomforted!

172 *A Glimpse of Pan*

I CAUGHT but a glimpse of him. Summer was here,
And I strayed from the town and its dust and heat,
And walked in a wood, while the noon was near,
Where the shadows were cool, and the atmosphere
Was misty with fragrances stirred by my feet
From surges of blossoms that billowed sheer
O'er the grasses, green and sweet.

And I peered through a vista of leaning trees,
  Tressed with long tangles of vines that swept
To the face of a river, that answered these
With vines in the wave like the vines in the breeze,
  Till the yearning lips of the ripples crept
And kissed them, with quavering ecstasies,
  And wistfully laughed and wept.

And there, like a dream in a swoon, I swear
  I saw Pan lying,—his limbs in the dew
And the shade, and his face in the dazzle and glare
Of the glad sunshine; while everywhere,
  Over, across, and around him blew
Filmy dragon-flies hither and there,
  And little white butterflies, two and two,
    In eddies of odorous air.

173 *A Southern Singer*

Written in Madison Cawein's "Lyrics and Idyls."

HEREIN are blown from out the South
  Songs blithe as those of Pan's pursed mouth—
As sweet in voice as, in perfume,
The night-breath of magnolia-bloom.

Such sumptuous languor lures the sense—
Such luxury of indolence—
The eyes blur as a nymph's might blur,
With water-lilies watching her.

You waken, thrilling at the trill
Of some wild bird that seems to spill
The silence full of winey drips
Of song that Fancy sips and sips.

Betimes, in brambled lanes wherethrough
The chipmunk stripes himself from view,
You pause to lop a creamy spray
Of elder-blossoms by the way.

Or where the morning dew is yet
Gray on the topmost rail, you set
A sudden palm and, vaulting, meet
Your vaulting shadow in the wheat.

On lordly swards, of suave incline,
Entessellate with shade and shine,
You shall misdoubt your lowly birth,
Clad on as one of princely worth:

The falcon on your wrist shall ride—
Your milk-white Arab side by side
With one of raven-black.—You fain
Would kiss the hand that holds the rein.

Nay, nay, Romancer! Poet! Seer!
Sing us back home—from there to here:
Grant your high grace and wit, but we
Most honor your simplicity.—

Herein are blown from out the South
Songs blithe as those of Pan's pursed mouth—
As sweet in voice as, in perfume,
The night-breath of magnolia-bloom.

174 *A Song of Long Ago*

A SONG of Long Ago:
Sing it lightly—sing it low—
Sing it softly—like the lisping of the lips we used to know
When our baby-laughter spilled
From the glad hearts ever filled
With music blithe as robin ever trilled!

Let the fragrant summer breeze,
And the leaves of locust-trees,
And the apple-buds and -blossoms, and the wings of honey-bees,
All palpitate with glee,
Till the happy harmony
Brings back each childish joy to you and me.

Let the eyes of fancy turn
Where the tumbled pippins burn
Like embers in the orchard's lap of tangled grass and fern,—
There let the old path wind
In and out, and on behind
The cider-press that chuckles as we grind.

Blend in the song the moan
Of the dove that grieves alone,
And the wild whir of the locust, and the bumble's drowsy drone;
And the low of cows that call
Through the pasture-bars when all
The landscape fades away at evenfall.

Then, far away and clear,
Through the dusky atmosphere,
Let the wailing of the killdee be the only sound we
hear:
O sad and sweet and low
As the memory may know
Is the glad-pathetic song of Long Ago!

175 *The Wife-Blessèd*

IN youth he wrought, with eyes ablur,
Lorn-faced and long of hair—
In youth—in youth he painted her
A sister of the air—
Could clasp her not, but felt the stir
Of pinions everywhere.

She lured his gaze, in braver days,
And tranced him sirenwise;
And he did paint her, through a haze
Of sullen paradise,
With scars of kisses on her face
And embers in her eyes.

And now—nor dream nor wild conceit—
Though faltering, as before—
Through tears he paints her, as is meet,
Tracing the dear face o'er
With lilied patience meek and sweet
As Mother Mary wore.

176 *By Her White Bed*

BY her white bed I muse a little space:
She fell asleep—not very long ago,—
And yet the grass was here and not the snow—
The leaf, the bud, the blossom, and—her face!—
Midsummer's heaven above us, and the grace
Of Love's own day, from dawn to afterglow;
The fireflies' glimmering, and the sweet and low
Plaint of the whippoorwills, and every place
In thicker twilight for the roses' scent.
Then *night*.—She slept—in such tranquillity,
I walk atiptoe still, nor *dare* to weep,
Feeling, in all this hush, she rests content—
That though God stood to wake her for me, she
Would mutely plead: "Nay, Lord! Let *him* so sleep."

177 *Reach Your Hand to Me*

REACH your hand to me, my friend,
With its heartiest caress—
Sometime there will come an end
To its present faithfulness—
Sometime I may ask in vain
For the touch of it again,
When between us land or sea
Holds it ever back from me.

Sometime I may need it so,
Groping somewhere in the night,
It will seem to me as though
Just a touch, however light,

Would make all the darkness day,
And along some sunny way
Lead me through an April-shower
Of my tears to this fair hour.

O the present is too sweet
To go on forever thus!
Round the corner of the street
Who can say what waits for us?—
Meeting—greeting, night and day,
Faring each the selfsame way—
Still somewhere the path must end.—
Reach your hand to me, my friend!

178 *Thanksgiving*

LET us be thankful—not alone because
Since last our universal thanks were told
We have grown greater in the world's applause,
And fortune's newer smiles surpass the old—

But thankful for all things that come as alms
From out the open hand of Providence:—
The winter clouds and storms—the summer calms—
The sleepless dread—the drowse of indolence

Let us be thankful—thankful for the prayers
Whose gracious answers were long, long delayed
That they might fall upon us unawares,
And bless us, as in greater need we prayed.

Let us be thankful for the loyal hand
That love held out in welcome to our own,
When love and *only* love could understand
The need of touches we had never known.

Let us be thankful for the longing eyes
That gave their secret to us as they wept,
Yet in return found, with a sweet surprise,
Love's touch upon their lids, and, smiling, slept.

And let us, too, be thankful that the tears
Of sorrow have not all been drained away,
That through them still, for all the coming years,
We may look on the dead face of To-day.

179 *A Ditty of No Tone—*

Piped to the Spirit of John Keats

WOULD that my lips might pour out in thy praise
A fitting melody—an air sublime,—
A song sun-washed and draped in dreamy haze—
The floss and velvet of luxurious rhyme:
A lay wrought of warm languors, and o'er-brimmed
With balminess, and fragrance of wild flowers
Such as the droning bee ne'er wearies of—
Such thoughts as might be hymned
To thee from this midsummer land of ours
Through shower and sunshine, blent for very love.

Deep silences in woody aisles wherethrough
Cool paths go loitering, and where the trill
Of best-remembered birds hath something new
In cadence for the hearing—lingering still
Through all the open day that lies beyond;
Reaches of pasture-lands, vine-wreathen oaks,
Majestic still in pathos of decay;—
The road—the wayside pond
Wherein the dragon-fly an instant soaks
His filmy wing-tips ere he flits away.

And I would pluck from out the dank, rich mould,
Thick-shaded from the sun of noon, the long
Lithe stalks of barley, topped with ruddy gold,
And braid them in the meshes of my song;
And with them I would tangle wheat and rye,
And wisps of greenest grass the katydid
Ere crept beneath the blades of, sulkily,
As harvest-hands went by;
And weave of all, as wildest fancy bid,
A crown of mingled song and bloom for thee.

180 *A Dream of Autumn*

MELLOW hazes, lowly trailing
Over wood and meadow, veiling
Somber skies, with wild-fowl sailing
Sailor-like to foreign lands;
And the north-wind overleaping
Summer's brink, and flood-like sweeping
Wrecks of roses where the weeping-
Willows wring their helpless hands.

Flared, like Titan torches flinging
Flakes of flame and embers, springing
From the vale, the trees stand swinging
  In the moaning atmosphere;
While in dead'ning lands the lowing
Of the cattle, sadder growing,
Fills the sense to overflowing
  With the sorrow of the year.

Sorrowfully, yet the sweeter
Sings the brook in rippled meter
Under boughs that lithely teeter
  Lorn birds, answering from the shores
Through the viny, shady-shiny
Interspaces, shot with tiny
Flying motes that fleck the winy
  Wave-engraven sycamores.

Fields of ragged stubble, wrangled
With rank weeds, and shocks of tangled
Corn, with crests like rent plumes dangled
  Over Harvest's battle-plain;
And the sudden whir and whistle
Of the quail that, like a missile,
Whizzes over thorn and thistle,
  And, a missile, drops again.

Muffled voices, hid in thickets
Where the redbird stops to stick its
Ruddy beak betwixt the pickets
  Of the truant's rustic trap;

And the sound of laughter ringing
Where, within the wild vine swinging,
Climb Bacchante's schoolmates, flinging
  Purple clusters in her lap.

Rich as wine, the sunset flashes
Round the tilted world, and dashes
Up the sloping west, and splashes
  Red foam over sky and sea—
Till my dream of Autumn, paling
In the splendor all-prevailing,
Like a sallow leaf goes sailing
  Down the silence solemnly.

181 *Robert Burns Wilson*

WHAT intuition named thee?—Through what thrill
Of the awed soul came the command divine
  Into the mother-heart, foretelling thine
Should palpitate with his whose raptures will
Sing on while daisies bloom and lavrocks trill
  Their undulating ways up through the fine
  Fair mists of heavenly reaches? Thy pure line
Falls as the dew of anthems, quiring still
The sweeter since the Scottish singer raised
  His voice therein, and, quit of every stress
    Of earthly ache and longing and despair,
Knew certainly each simple thing he praised
  Was no less worthy, for its lowliness,
    Than any joy of all the glory There.

182

The Rose

IT tossed its head at the wooing breeze;
And the sun, like a bashful swain,
Beamed on it through the waving trees
With a passion all in vain,—
For my rose laughed in a crimson glee,
And hid in the leaves in wait for me.

The honey-bee came there to sing
His love through the languid hours,
And vaunt of his hives, as a proud old king
Might boast of his palace-towers:
But my rose bowed in a mockery,
And hid in the leaves in wait for me.

The humming-bird, like a courtier gay,
Dipped down with a dalliant song,
And twanged his wings through the roundelay
Of love the whole day long:
Yet my rose turned from his minstrelsy
And hid in the leaves in wait for me.

The firefly came in the twilight dim
My red, red rose to woo—
Till quenched was the flame of love in him,
And the light of his lantern too,
As my rose wept with dewdrops three
And hid in the leaves in wait for me.

And I said: I will cull my own sweet rose—
Some day I will claim as mine
The priceless worth of the flower that knows
No change, but a bloom divine—

The bloom of a fadeless constancy
That hides in the leaves in wait for me!

But time passed by in a strange disguise,
  And I marked it not, but lay
In a lazy dream, with drowsy eyes,
  Till the summer slipped away,
And a chill wind sang in a minor key:
"Where is the rose that waits for thee?"

. . . . . .

I dream to-day, o'er a purple stain
  Of bloom on a withered stalk,
Pelted down by the autumn rain
  In the dust of the garden-walk,
That an Angel-rose in the world to be
Will hide in the leaves in wait for me.

183

Elizabeth

May 1, 1891

ELIZABETH! Elizabeth!
The first May-morning whispereth
Thy gentle name in every breeze
That lispeth through the young-leaved trees,
New raimented in white and green
Of bloom and leaf to crown thee queen;—
And, as in odorous chorus, all
The orchard-blossoms sweetly call
Even as a singing voice that saith,
  Elizabeth! Elizabeth!

Elizabeth! Lo, lily-fair,
In deep, cool shadows of thy hair,
Thy face maintaineth its repose.—
Is it, O sister of the rose,
So better, sweeter, blooming thus
Than in this briery world with us?—
Where frost o'ertaketh, and the breath
Of biting winter harrieth
With sleeted rains and blighting snows
All fairest blooms—Elizabeth!

Nay, then!—So reign, Elizabeth,
Crowned, in thy May-day realm of death!
Put forth the scepter of thy love
In every star-tipped blossom of
The grassy dais of thy throne!
Sadder are we, thus left alone,
But gladder they that thrill to see
Thy mother's rapture, greeting thee.
Bereaved are we by life—not death—
Elizabeth! Elizabeth!

184 *The Wandering Jew*

THE stars are failing, and the sky
Is like a field of faded flowers;
The winds on weary wings go by;
The moon hides, and the tempest lowers;
And still through every clime and age
I wander on a pilgrimage
That all men know an idle quest,
For that the goal I seek is—REST!

I hear the voice of summer streams,
And, following, I find the brink
Of cooling springs, with childish dreams
Returning as I bend to drink—
But suddenly, with startled eyes,
My face looks on its grim disguise
Of long gray beard; and so, distressed,
I hasten on, nor taste of rest.

I come upon a merry group
Of children in the dusky wood,
Who answer back the owlet's whoop,
That laughs as it had understood;
And I would pause a little space,
But that each happy blossom-face
Is like to one *His* hands have blessed
Who sent me forth in search of rest.

Sometimes I fain would stay my feet
In shady lanes, where huddled kine
Couch in the grasses cool and sweet,
And lift their patient eyes to mine;
But I, for thoughts that ever then
Go back to Bethlehem again,
Must needs fare on my weary quest,
And weep for very need of rest.

Is there no end? I plead in vain:
Lost worlds nor living answer me.
Since Pontius Pilate's awful reign
Have I not passed eternity?

Have I not drunk the fetid breath
Of every fevered phase of death,
And come unscathed through every pest
And scourge and plague that promised rest?

Have I not seen the stars go out
That shed their light o'er Galilee,
And mighty kingdoms tossed about
And crumbled clod-like in the sea?
Dead ashes of dead ages blow
And cover me like drifting snow,
And time laughs on as 'twere a jest
That I have any need of rest.

185- *The Cyclone*

SO lone I stood, the very trees seemed drawn
In conference with themselves.—Intense—intense
Seemed everything;—the summer splendor on
The sight,—magnificence!

A babe's life might not lighter fail and die
Than failed the sunlight.—Though the hour was noon,
The palm of midnight might not lighter lie
Upon the brow of June.

With eyes upraised, I saw the underwings
Of swallows—gone the instant afterward—
While from the elms there came strange twitterings,
Stilled scarce ere they were heard.

The river seemed to shiver; and, far down
  Its darkened length, I saw the sycamores
Lean inward closer, under the vast frown
  That weighed above the shores.

Then was a roar, born of some awful burst! . . .
  And one lay, shrieking, chattering, in my path—
Flung—he or I—out of some space accurst
  As of Jehovah's wrath:

Nor barely had he wreaked his latest prayer,
  Ere back the noon flashed o'er the ruin done,
And, o'er uprooted forests touseled there,
  The birds sang in the sun.

186 *To the Serenader*

TINKLE on, O sweet guitar,
  Let the dancing fingers
Loiter where the low notes are
  Blended with the singer's:
Let the midnight pour the moon's
  Mellow wine of glory
Down upon him through the tune's
  Old romantic story!

I am listening, my love,
  Through the cautious lattice,
Wondering why the stars above
  All are blinking at us;

Wondering if his eyes from there
  Catch the moonbeam's shimmer
As it lights the robe I wear
  With a ghostly glimmer.

Lilt thy song, and lute away
  In the wildest fashion:—
Pour thy rippling roundelay
  O'er the heights of passion!—
Flash it down the fretted strings
  Till thy mad lips, missing
All but smothered whisperings,
  Press this rose I'm kissing.

187 *The Curse of the Wandering Foot*

ALL hope of rest withdrawn me!—
  What dread command hath put
This awful curse upon me—
  The curse of the wandering foot?
Forward and backward and thither,
  And hither and yon again—
Wandering ever! And whither?
  Answer them, God! Amen.

The blue skies are far o'er me—
  The bleak fields near below:
Where the mother that bore me?—
  Where her grave in the snow?—

Glad in her trough of a coffin—
The sad eyes frozen shut
That wept so often, often,
The curse of the wandering foot!

Here in your marts I care not
Whatsoever ye think.
Good folk many who dare not
Give me to eat and drink:
Give me to sup of your pity—
Feast me on prayers!—O ye,
Met I your Christ in the city,
He would fare forth with me—

Forward and onward and thither,
And hither again and yon,
With milk for our drink together
And honey to feed upon—
Nor hope of rest withdrawn us,
Since the one Father put
The blessèd curse upon us—
The curse of the wandering foot.

188 *A Wraith of Summer-time*

IN its color, shade and shine,
'Twas a summer warm as wine,
With an effervescent flavoring of flowered bough and vine,
And a fragrance and a taste
Of ripe roses gone to waste,
And a dreamy sense of sun- and moon- and star-light interlaced.

'Twas a summer such as broods
O'er enchanted solitudes,
Where the hand of Fancy leads us through voluptuary moods,
And with lavish love outpours
All the wealth of out-of-doors,
And woos our feet o'er velvet paths and honeysuckle floors.

'Twas a summer-time long dead,—
And its roses, white and red,
And its reeds and water-lilies down along the river-bed,—
O they all are ghostly things—
For the ripple never sings,
And the rocking lily never even rustles as it rings!

189 *Out of Nazareth*

"HE shall sleep unscathed of thieves
Who loves Allah and believes."
Thus heard one who shared the tent,
In the far-off Orient,
Of the Bedouin ben Ahrzz—
Nobler never loved the stars
Through the palm-leaves nigh the dim
Dawn his courser neighed to him!

He said: "Let the sands be swarmed
With such thieves as I, and thou
Shalt at morning rise, unharmed,
Light as eyelash to the brow
Of thy camel, amber-eyed,
Ever munching either side,
Striding still, with nestled knees,
Through the midnight's oases.

"Who can rob thee and thou hast
More than this that thou hast cast
At my feet—this dust of gold?
Simply this and that, all told!
Hast thou not a treasure of
Such a thing as men call love?

"Can the dusky band I lead
Rob thee of thy daily need
Of a whiter soul, or steal
What thy lordly prayers reveal?
Who could be enriched of thee
By such hoard of poverty
As thy niggard hand pretends
To dole me—thy worst of friends?
Therefore shouldst thou pause to bless
One indeed who blesses thee:
Robbing thee, I dispossess
But myself.—Pray thou for me!"

He shall sleep unscathed of thieves
Who loves Allah and believes.

190 *Nessmuk*

I HAIL thee, Nessmuk, for the lofty tone
Yet simple grace that marks thy poetry!
True forester thou art, and still to be,
Even in happier fields than thou hast known.
Thus, in glad visions, glimpses am I shown
Of groves delectable—"preserves" for thee—
Ranged but by friends of thine—I name thee three:—
First, Chaucer, with his bald old pate new-grown
With changeless laurel; next, in Lincoln-green,
Gold-belted, -bowed and-bugled, Robin Hood;
And next, Ike Walton, patient and serene:
These three, O Nessmuk, gathered hunter-wise,
Are camped on hither slopes of Paradise,
To hail thee first and greet thee, as they should.

191 *The Hoosier Folk-Child*

THE Hoosier Folk-Child—all unsung—
Unlettered all of mind and tongue;
Unmastered, unmolested—made
Most wholly frank and unafraid:
Untaught of any school—unvexed
Of law or creed—all unperplexed—
Unsermoned, ay, and undefiled,
An all imperfect-perfect child—
A type which (Heaven forgive us!) you
And I do tardy honor to,
And so profane the sanctities
Of our most sacred memories.

Who, growing thus from boy to man,
That dares not be American?
Go, Pride, with prudent underbuzz—
Go *whistle!* as the Folk-Child does.

The Hoosier Folk-Child's world is not
Much wider than the stable-lot
Between the house and highway fence
That bounds the home his father rents.
His playmates mostly are the ducks
And chickens, and the boy that "shucks
Corn by the shock," and talks of town,
And whether eggs are "up" or "down,"
And prophesies in boastful tone
Of "owning horses of his own,"
And "being his own man," and "when
He gets to be, what he'll do then."—
Takes out his jack-knife dreamily
And makes the Folk-Child two or three
Crude corn-stalk figures,—a wee span
Of horses and a little man.

The Hoosier Folk-Child's eyes are wise
And wide and round as Brownies' eyes:
The smile they wear is ever blent
With all-expectant wonderment,—
On homeliest things they bend a look
As rapt as o'er a picture-book,
And seem to ask, whate'er befall,
The happy reason of it all:—
Why grass is all so glad a green,
And leaves—and what their lispings mean;—

Why buds grow on the boughs, and why
They burst in blossom by and by—
As though the orchard in the breeze
Had shook and popped its *pop-corn trees*,
To lure and whet, as well they might,
Some seven-league giant's appetite!

The Hoosier Folk-Child's chubby face
Has scant refinement, caste or grace,—
From crown to chin, and cheek to cheek,
It bears the grimy water-streak
Of rinsings such as some long rain
Might drool across the window-pane
Wherethrough he peers, with troubled frown,
As some lorn team drives by for town.
His brow is elfed with wispish hair,
With tangles in it here and there,
As though the warlocks snarled it so
At midmirk when the moon sagged low,
And boughs did toss and skreek and shake,
And children moaned themselves awake,
With fingers clutched, and starting sight
Blind as the blackness of the night!

The Hoosier Folk-Child!—Rich is he
In all the wealth of poverty!
He owns nor title nor estate,
Nor speech but half articulate,—
He owns nor princely robe nor crown;—
Yet, draped in patched and faded brown,
He owns the bird-songs of the hills—
The laughter of the April rills;

And his are all the diamonds set
In Morning's dewy coronet,—
And his the Dusk's first minted stars
That twinkle through the pasture-bars
And litter all the skies at night
With glittering scraps of silver light;—
The rainbow's bar, from rim to rim,
In beaten gold, belongs to him.

192 *The Singer*

WHILE with Ambition's hectic flame
He wastes the midnight oil,
And dreams, high-throned on heights of fame,
To rest him from his toil,—

Death's Angel, like a vast eclipse,
Above him spreads her wings,
And fans the embers of his lips
To ashes as he sings.

193 *To An Importunate Ghost*

GET gone, thou most uncomfortable ghost!
Thou really dost annoy me with thy thin
Impalpable transparency of grin;
And the vague, shadowy shape of thee almost
Hath vext me beyond boundary and coast
Of my broad patience. Stay thy chattering chin,
And reel the tauntings of thy vain tongue in,

Nor tempt me further with thy vaporish boast
That I am *helpless* to combat thee! Well,
Have at thee, then! Yet if a doom most dire
Thou wouldst escape, flee whilst thou canst!—Revile
Me not, Miasmic Mist!—Rank Air! *retire!*
One instant longer an thou haunt'st me, I'll
Inhale thee, O thou wraith despicable!

194 *June at Woodruff*

OUT at Woodruff Place—afar
From the city's glare and jar,
With the leafy trees, instead
Of the awnings, overhead;
With the shadows cool and sweet,
For the fever of the street;
With the silence, like a prayer,
Breathing round us everywhere.

Gracious anchorage, at last,
From the billows of the vast
Tide of life that comes and goes,
Whence and where nobody knows—
Moving, like a skeptic's thought,
Out of nowhere into naught.
Touch and tame us with thy grace,
Placid calm of Woodruff Place!

Weave a wreath of beechen leaves
For the brow that throbs and grieves
O'er the ledger, bloody-lined,
'Neath the sunstruck window-blind!

Send the breath of woodland bloom
Through the sick man's prison-room,
Till his old farm-home shall swim
Sweet in mind to hearten him!

Out at Woodruff Place the Muse
Dips her sandal in the dews,
Sacredly as night and dawn
Baptize lilied grove and lawn:
Woody path, or paven way—
She doth haunt them night and day,—
Sun or moonlight through the trees,
To her eyes, are melodies.

Swinging lanterns, twinkling clear
Through night-scenes, are songs to her—
Tinted lilts and choiring hues,
Blent with children's glad halloos;
Then belated lays that fade
Into midnight's serenade—
Vine-like words and zithern-strings
Twined through all her slumberings.

Blessèd be each hearthstone set
Neighboring the violet!
Blessèd every roof-tree prayed
Over by the beech's shade!
Blessèd doorway, opening where
We may look on Nature—there
Hand to hand and face to face—
Storied realm, or Woodruff Place.

195 *Envoy*

JUST as of old! The world rolls on and on;
The day dies into night—night into dawn—
Dawn into dusk—through centuries untold.—
Just as of old.

Time loiters not. The river ever flows,
Its brink or white with blossoms or with snows;
Its tide or warm with spring or winter cold:
Just as of old.

Lo! where is the beginning, where the end
Of living, loving, longing? *Listen*, friend!—
God answers with a silence of pure gold—
Just as of old.

ARMAZINDY

196 *The Little Red Ribbon*

THE little red ribbon, the ring and the rose!
The summer-time comes, and the summer-time goes—
And never a blossom in all of the land
As white as the gleam of her beckoning hand!

The long winter months, and the glare of the snows;
The little red ribbon, the ring and the rose!
And never a glimmer of sun in the skies
As bright as the light of her glorious eyes!

Dreams only are true; but they fade and are gone—
For her face is not here when I waken at dawn;
The little red ribbon, the ring and the rose
Mine only; *hers* only the dream and repose.

I am weary of waiting, and weary of tears,
And my heart wearies, too, all these desolate years,
Moaning over the one only song that it knows,—
The little red ribbon, the ring and the rose!

197 *A Poor Man's Wealth*

A POOR man? Yes, I must confess—
No wealth of gold do I possess;
No pastures fine, with grazing kine,
Nor fields of waving grain are mine:
No foot of fat or fallow land
Where rightfully my foot may stand
The while I claim it as my own—
By deed and title, mine alone.

Ah, poor indeed! perhaps you say—
But spare me your compassion, pray!—
When I ride not—with you—I walk
In Nature's company, and talk
With one who will not slight or slur
The child forever dear to her—
And one who answers back, be sure,
With smile for smile, though I am poor.

And while communing thus, I count
An inner wealth of large amount,—
The wealth of honest purpose blent
With Penury's environment,—
The wealth of owing naught to-day
But debts that I would gladly pay,
With wealth of thanks still unexpressed
With cumulative interest,—

A wealth of patience and content—
For all my ways improvident;
A faith still fondly exercised—
For all my plans unrealized;

A wealth of promises that still,
Howe'er I fail, I hope to fill;
A wealth of charity for those
Who pity me my ragged clothes.

A poor man? Yes, I must confess—
No wealth of gold do I possess;
No pastures fine, with grazing kine,
Nor fields of waving grain are mine;
But ah, my friend! I've wealth, no end!
For millionaires might condescend
To bend the knee and envy me
This opulence of poverty.

198 *To Edgar Wilson Nye*

O "WILLIAM,"—in thy blithe companionship
What liberty is mine—what sweet release
From clamorous strife, and yet what boisterous peace!
Ho! ho! it is thy fancy's finger-tip
That dints the dimple now, and kinks the lip
That scarce may sing, in all this glad increase
Of merriment! So, pray-thee, do not cease
To cheer me thus;—for, underneath the quip
Of thy droll sorcery, the wrangling fret
Of all distress is stilled—no syllable
Of sorrow vexeth me—no teardrops wet
My teeming lids save those that leap to tell
Thee thou 'st a guest that overweepeth, yet
Only because thou jokest overwell.

199

The Silent Victors

MAY 30, 1878

"Dying for victory, cheer on cheer
Thundered on his eager ear."
—CHARLES L. HOLSTEIN.

I

DEEP, tender, firm and true, the Nation's heart
Throbs for her gallant heroes passed away,
Who in grim Battle's drama played their part,
And slumber here to-day.—

Warm hearts that beat their lives out at the shrine
Of Freedom, while our country held its breath
As brave battalions wheeled themselves in line
And marched upon their death:

When Freedom's Flag, its natal wounds scarce healed,
Was torn from peaceful winds and flung again
To shudder in the storm of battle-field—
The elements of men,—

When every star that glittered was a mark
For Treason's ball, and every rippling bar
Of red and white was sullied with the dark
And purple stain of war:

When angry guns, like famished beasts of prey,
Were howling o'er their gory feast of lives,
And sending dismal echoes far away
To mothers, maids, and wives:—

The mother, kneeling in the empty night,
With pleading hands uplifted for the son
Who, even as she prayed, had fought the fight—
The victory had won:

The wife, with trembling hand that wrote to say
The babe was waiting for the sire's caress—
The letter meeting that upon the way,—
The babe was fatherless:

The maiden, with her lips, in fancy, pressed
Against the brow once dewy with her breath,
Now lying numb, unknown, and uncaressed
Save by the dews of death.

II

What meed of tribute can the poet pay
The Soldier, but to trail the ivy-vine
Of idle rhyme above his grave to-day
In epitaph design?—

Or wreathe with laurel-words the icy brows
That ache no longer with a dream of fame,
But, pillowed lowly in the narrow house,
Renown'd beyond the name.

The dewy tear-drops of the night may fall,
And tender morning with her shining hand
May brush them from the grasses green and tall
That undulate the land.—

Yet song of Peace nor din of toil and thrift,
  Nor chanted honors, with the flowers we heap,
Can yield us hope the Hero's head to lift
  Out of its dreamless sleep:

The dear old flag, whose faintest flutter flies
  A stirring echo through each patriot breast,
Can never coax to life the folded eyes
  That saw its wrongs redressed—

That watched it waver when the fight was hot,
  And blazed with newer courage to its aid,
Regardless of the shower of shell and shot
  Through which the charge was made;—

And when, at last, they saw it plume its wings,
  Like some proud bird in stormy element,
And soar untrammeled on its wanderings,
  They closed in death, content.

III

O mother, you who miss the smiling face
  Of that dear boy who vanished from your sight,
And left you weeping o'er the vacant place
  He used to fill at night,—

Who left you dazed, bewildered, on a day
  That echoed wild huzzas, and roar of guns
That drowned the farewell words you tried to say
  To incoherent ones;—

Be glad and proud you had the life to give—
  Be comforted through all the years to come,—
Your country has a longer life to live,
  Your son a better home.

O widow, weeping o'er the orphaned child,
  Who only lifts his questioning eyes to send
A keener pang to grief unreconciled,—
  Teach him to comprehend

He had a father brave enough to stand
  Before the fire of Treason's blazing gun,
That, dying, he might will the rich old land
  Of Freedom to his son.

And, maiden, living on through lonely years
  In fealty to love's enduring ties,—
With strong faith gleaming through the tender tears
  That gather in your eyes,

Look up! and own, in gratefulness of prayer,
  Submission to the will of Heaven's High Host:—
I see your Angel-soldier pacing there,
  Expectant at his post.—

I see the rank and file of armies vast,
  That muster under one supreme control;
I hear the trumpet sound the signal-blast—
  The calling of the roll—

The grand divisions falling into line
And forming, under voice of One alone
Who gives command, and joins with tongue divine
The hymn that shakes the Throne.

IV

And thus, in tribute to the forms that rest
In their last camping-ground, we strew the bloom
And fragrance of the flowers they loved the best,
In silence o'er the tomb.

With reverent hands we twine the Hero's wreath
And clasp it tenderly on stake or stone
That stands the sentinel for each beneath
Whose glory is our own.

While in the violet that greets the sun,
We see the azure eye of some lost boy;
And in the rose the ruddy cheek of one
We kissed in childish joy,—

Recalling, haply, when he marched away,
He laughed his loudest though his eyes were wet,—
The kiss he gave his mother's brow that day
Is there and burning yet:

And through the storm of grief around her tossed,
One ray of saddest comfort she may see,—
Four hundred thousand sons like hers were lost
To weeping Liberty.

But draw aside the drapery of gloom,
  And let the sunshine chase the clouds away
And gild with brighter glory every tomb
  We decorate to-day:

And in the holy silence reigning round,
  While prayers of perfume bless the atmosphere,
Where loyal souls of love and faith are found,
  Thank God that Peace is here!

And let each angry impulse that may start,
  Be smothered out of every loyal breast;
And, rocked within the cradle of the heart,
  Let every sorrow rest.

200

An Old-Timer

HERE where the wayward stream
  Is restful as a dream,
  And where the banks o'erlook
A pool from out whose deeps
My pleased face upward peeps,
    I cast my hook.

Silence and sunshine blent!—
A Sabbath-like content
  Of wood and wave;—a free-
Hand landscape grandly wrought
Of Summer's brightest thought
    And mastery.—

For here form, light and shade,
And color—all are laid
With skill so rarely fine,
The eye may even see
The ripple tremblingly
Lip at the line.

I mark the dragon-fly
Flit waveringly by
In ever-veering flight,
Till, in a hush profound,
I see him eddy round
The "cork" and—'light!

Ho! with the boy's faith then
Brimming my heart again,
And knowing, soon or late,
The "nibble" yet shall roll
Its thrills along the pole,
I—breathless—wait.

201

What Redress

I PRAY you, do not use this thing
For vengeance; but if questioning
What wound, when dealt your humankind,
Goes deepest,—surely he will find
Who wrongs *you*, loving *him* no less—
There's nothing hurts like tenderness.

202

The Old School-Chum

HE puts the poem by, to say
His eyes are not themselves to-day!

A sudden glamour o'er his sight—
A something vague, indefinite—

An oft-recurring blur that blinds
The printed meaning of the lines,

And leaves the mind all dusk and dim
In swimming darkness—strange to him!

It is not childishness, I guess,—
Yet something of the tenderness

That used to wet his lashes when
A boy seems troubling him again;—

The old emotion, sweet and wild,
That drove him truant when a child,

That he might hide the tears that fell
Above the lesson—"Little Nell."

And so it is he puts aside
The poem he has vainly tried

To follow; and, as one who sighs
In failure, through a poor disguise

Of smiles, he dries his tears, to say
His eyes are not themselves to-day.

Three Singing Friends

I

LEE O. HARRIS

SCHOOLMASTER and Songmaster! Memory
Enshrines thee with an equal love for thy
Duality of gifts,—thy pure and high
Endowments—Learning rare, and Poesy.
These were as mutual handmaids, serving thee,
Throughout all seasons of the years gone by,
With all enduring joys 'twixt earth and sky—
In turn shared nobly with thy friends and me.
Thus is it that thy clear song, ringing on,
Is endless inspiration, fresh and free
As the old Mays at verge of June sunshine;
And musical as then, at dewy dawn,
The robin hailed us, and all twinklingly
Our one path wandered under wood and vine.

II

BENJ. S. PARKER

Thy rapt song makes of Earth a realm of light
And shadow mystical as some dreamland
Arched with unfathomed azure—vast and grand
With splendor of the morn; or dazzling bright
With orient noon; or strewn with stars of night

Thick as the daisies blown in grasses fanned
By odorous midsummer breezes and
Showered over by all bird-songs exquisite.
This is thy voice's beatific art—
To make melodious all things below,
Calling through them, from far, diviner space
Thy clearer hail to us.—The faltering heart
Thou cheerest; and thy fellow-mortal so
Fares onward under Heaven with lifted face.

III

JAMES NEWTON MATTHEWS

Bard of our Western world!—its prairies wide,
With edging woods, lost creeks and hidden ways;
Its isolated farms, with roundelays
Of orchard warblers heard on every side;
Its cross-road school-house, wherein still abide
Thy fondest memories,—since there thy gaze
First fell on classic verse; and thou, in praise
Of that, didst find thine own song glorified.
So singing, smite the strings and counterchange
The lucently melodious drippings of
Thy happy harp, from airs of "Tempe Vale,"
To chirp and trill of lowliest flight and range,
In praise of our To-day and home and love—
Thou meadow-lark no less than nightingale.

204 *The Song I Never Sing*

AS when in dreams we sometimes hear
A melody so faint and fine
And musically sweet and clear,
It flavors all the atmosphere
With harmony divine,—
So, often in my waking dreams,
I hear a melody that seems
Like fairy voices whispering
To me the song I never sing.

Sometimes when brooding o'er the years
My lavish youth has thrown away—
When all the glowing past appears
But as a mirage that my tears
Have crumbled to decay,—
I thrill to find the ache and pain
Of my remorse is stilled again,
As, forward bent and listening,
I hear the song I never sing.

A murmuring of rhythmic words,
Adrift on tunes whose currents flow
Melodious with the trill of birds,
And far-off lowing of the herds
In lands of long ago;
And every sound the truant loves
Comes to me like the coo of doves
When first in blooming fields of Spring
I heard the song I never sing.

The echoes of old voices, wound
In limpid streams of laughter where
The river Time runs bubble-crowned,
And giddy eddies ripple round
The lilies growing there;
Where roses, bending o'er the brink,
Drain their own kisses as they drink,
And ivies climb and twine and cling
About the song I never sing.

An ocean-surge of sound that falls
As though a tide of Heavenly art
Had tempested the gleaming halls
And crested o'er the golden walls
In showers on my heart. . . .
Thus—thus, with open arms and eyes
Uplifted toward the alien skies,
Forgetting every earthly thing,
I hear the song I never sing.

O nameless lay, sing clear and strong,
Pour down thy melody divine
Till purifying floods of song
Have washed away the stains of wrong
That dim this soul of mine!
O woo me near and nearer thee,
Till my glad lips may catch the key,
And, with a voice unwavering,
Join in the song I never sing.

205 *Little David*

THE mother of the little boy that sleeps
Has blest assurance, even as she weeps:
She knows her little boy has now no pain—
No further ache, in body, heart or brain:
All sorrow is lulled for him—all distress
Passed into utter peace and restfulness.—
All health that heretofore has been denied—
All happiness, all hope, and all beside
Of children longing, now he clasps and keeps
In wordless joy—the little boy that sleeps.

206 *The Old Trundle-Bed*

O THE old trundle bed where I slept when a boy!
What cramped king might not covet the joy?
The glory and peace of that slumber of mine,
Like a long, gracious rest in the bosom divine:
The coarse, homely couch, hidden close from the light,
But dearly drawn from its hiding at night.
O a mass of delight, from the foot to the head,
Was the queer little, dear little, old trundle-bed!

O the old trundle-bed, where I wondering saw
The stars through the window, and listened with awe
To the sigh of the winds as they tremblingly crept
Through the trees where the robin so restlessly slept:
Where I heard the low, murmurous chirp of the wren,
And the katydid listlessly chirrup again,
Till my fancies grew faint and were drowsily led
Through the maze of the dreams of the old trundle-bed.

O the old trundle-bed! O the old trundle-bed!
With its plump little pillow, and old-fashioned spread;
Its snowy-white sheets, and the blankets above,
Smoothed down and tucked round with the touches of love,
The voice of my mother to lull me to sleep
With the old fairy stories my memories keep
Still fresh as the lilies that bloom o'er the head
Once bowed o'er my own in the old trundle-bed.

207 The Voices

DOWN in the night I hear them:
The Voices—unknown—unguessed,—
That whisper, and lisp, and murmur,
And will not let me rest.—

Voices that seem to question,
In unknown words, of me,
Of fabulous ventures, and hopes and dreams
Of this and the World to be.

Voices of mirth and music,
As in sumptuous homes; and sounds
Of mourning, as of gathering friends
In country burial-grounds.

Cadence of maiden voices—
Their lovers' blent with these;
And of little children singing,
As under orchard trees.

And often, up from the chaos
  Of my deepest dreams, I hear
Sounds of their phantom laughter
  Filling the atmosphere:

They call to me from the darkness;
  They cry to me from the gloom,
Till I start sometimes from my pillow
  And peer through the haunted room;

When the face of the moon at the window
  Wears a pallor like my own,
And seems to be listening with me
  To the low, mysterious tone,—

The low, mysterious clamor
  Of voices that seem to be
Striving in vain to whisper
  Of secret things to me;—

Of a something dread to be warned of;
  Of a rapture yet withheld;
Or hints of the marvelous beauty
  Of songs unsyllabled.

But ever and ever the meaning
  Falters and fails and dies,
And only the silence quavers
  With the sorrow of my sighs.

And I answer:—O Voices, ye may not
  Make me to understand
Till my own voice, mingling with you,
  Laughs in the Shadow-land.

208

The Lovely Child

LILIES are both pure and fair,
Growing midst the roses there—
Roses, too, both red and pink,
Are quite beautiful, I think.

But of all bright blossoms—best—
Purest—fairest—loveliest,—
Could there be a sweeter thing
Than a primrose, blossoming?

209

A Good-Bye

"GOOD-BYE, my friend!"
He takes her hand—
The pressures blend:
They understand
But vaguely why, with drooping eye,
Each moans—"Good-bye!—Good-bye!"

"Dear friend, good-bye!"
O she could smile
If she might cry
A little while!—
She says, "I *ought* to smile—but I—
Forgive me—*There!*—Good-bye!"

"'Good-bye?' Ah, no:
I hate," says he,
"These 'good-byes' so!"
"And *I*," says she,
"Detest them so—why, I should *die*,
Were this a *real* 'good-bye!'"

210 *Orlie Wilde*

A GODDESS, with a siren's grace,—
A sun-haired girl on a craggy place
Above a bay where fish-boats lay
Drifting about like birds of prey.

Wrought was she of a painter's dream—
Wise only as are artists wise,
My artist-friend, Rolf Herschkelhiem,
With deep sad eyes of oversize,
And face of melancholy guise.

I pressed him that he tell to me
This masterpiece's history.
He turned—*re*turned—and thus beguiled
Me with the tale of Orlie Wilde:—

"We artists live ideally:
We breed our firmest facts of air;
We make our own reality—
We dream a thing and it is so.
The fairest scenes we ever see
Are mirages of memory;
The sweetest thoughts we ever know
We plagiarize from Long-Ago:
And as the girl on canvas there
Is marvelously rare and fair,
'Tis only inasmuch as she
Is dumb and may not speak to me!"
He tapped me with his mahlstick—then
The picture,—and went on again:

"Orlie Wilde, the fisher's child—
I see her yet, as fair and mild
As ever nursling summer-day
Dreamed on the bosom of the bay:
For I was twenty then, and went
Alone and long-haired—all content
With promises of sounding name
And fantasies of future fame,
And thoughts that now my mind discards
As editor a fledgling bard's.

"At evening once I chanced to go,
With pencil and portfolio,
Adown the street of silver sand
That winds beneath this craggy land,
To make a sketch of some old scurf
Of driftage, nosing through the surf
A splintered mast, with knarl and strand
Of rigging-rope and tattered threads
Of flag and streamer and of sail
That fluttered idly in the gale
Or whipped themselves to sadder shreds.
The while I wrought, half listlessly,
On my dismantled subject, came
A sea-bird, settling on the same
With plaintive moan, as though that he
Had lost his mate upon the sea;
And—with my melancholy trend—
It brought dim dreams half understood—
It wrought upon my morbid mood,—
I thought of my own voyagings
That had no end—that have no end.—

And, like the sea-bird, I made moan
That I was loveless and alone.
And when at last with weary wings
It went upon its wanderings, I
With upturned face I watched its flight
Until this picture met my sight:
A goddess, with a siren's grace,—
A sun-haired girl on a craggy place
Above a bay where fish-boats lay
Drifting about like birds of prey.

'In airy poise she, gazing, stood
A matchless form of womanhood.
That brought a thought that if for me
Such eyes had sought across the sea,
I could have swum the widest tide
That ever mariner defied,
And, at the shore, could on have gone
To that high crag she stood upon,
To there entreat and say, 'My Sweet,
Behold thy servant at thy feet.'
And to my soul I said: 'Above,
There stands the idol of thy love!'

'In this rapt, awed, ecstatic state
I gazed—till lo! I was aware
A fisherman had joined her there—
A weary man, with halting gait,
Who toiled beneath a basket's weight:
Her father, as I guessed, for she
Had run to meet him gleefully

And ta'en his burden to herself,
That perched upon her shoulder's shelf
So lightly that she, tripping, neared
A jutting crag and disappeared;
But left the echo of a song
That thrills me yet, and will as long
As I have being! . . .

. . . "Evenings came
And went,—but each the same—the same:
She watched above, and even so
I stood there watching from below;
Till, grown so bold at last, I sung,—
(What matter now the theme thereof!)
It brought an answer from her tongue—
Faint as the murmur of a dove,
Yet all the more the song of love. . . .

"I turned and looked upon the bay,
With palm to forehead—eyes a-blur
In the sea's smile—meant but for her!—
I saw the fish-boats far away
In misty distance, lightly drawn
In chalk-dots on the horizon—
Looked back at her, long, wistfully,—
And, pushing off an empty skiff,
I beckoned her to quit the cliff
And yield me her rare company
Upon a little pleasure-cruise.—
She stood, as loathful to refuse,
To muse for full a moment's time,—
Then answered back in pantomime

'She feared some danger from the sea
Were she discovered thus with me.'
I motioned then to ask her if
I might not join her on the cliff;
And back again, with graceful wave
Of lifted arm, she answer gave
'She feared some danger from the sea.'

"Impatient, piqued, impetuous, I
Sprang in the boat, and flung 'Good-bye'
From pouted mouth with angry hand,
And madly pulled away from land
With lusty stroke, despite that she
Held out her hands entreatingly:
And when far out, with covert eye
I shoreward glanced, I saw her fly
In reckless haste adown the crag,
Her hair a-flutter like a flag
Of gold that danced across the strand
In little mists of silver sand.
All curious I, pausing, tried
To fancy what it all implied,—
When suddenly I found my feet
Were wet; and, underneath the seat
On which I sat, I heard the sound
Of gurgling waters, and I found
The boat aleak alarmingly. . . .
I turned and looked upon the sea,
Whose every wave seemed mocking me;
I saw the fishers' sails once more—
In dimmer distance than before;
I saw the sea-bird wheeling by,

With foolish wish that *I* could fly:
I thought of firm earth, home and friends—
I thought of everything that tends
To drive a man to frenzy and
To wholly lose his own command;
I thought of all my waywardness—
Thought of a mother's deep distress;
Of youthful follies yet unpurged—
Sins, as the seas, about me surged—
Thought of the printer's ready pen
To-morrow drowning me again;—
A million things without a name—
I thought of everything but—Fame. . . .

"A memory yet is in my mind,
So keenly clear and sharp-defined,
I picture every phase and line
Of life and death, and neither mine,—
While some fair seraph, golden-haired,
Bends over me,—with white arms bared,
That strongly plait themselves about
My drowning weight and lift me out—
With joy too great for words to state
Or tongue to dare articulate!

"And this seraphic ocean-child
And heroine was Orlie Wilde:
And thus it was I came to hear
Her voice's music in my ear—
Ay, thus it was Fate paved the way
That I walk desolate to-day!" . . .

The artist paused and bowed his face
Within his palms a little space,
While reverently on his form
I bent my gaze and marked a storm
That shook his frame as wrathfully
As some typhoon of agony,
And fraught with sobs—the more profound
For that peculiar laughing sound
We hear when strong men weep . . . I lent
With warmest sympathy—I bent
To stroke with soothing hand his brow,
He murmuring—"'Tis over now!—
And shall I tie the silken thread
Of my frail romance?" "Yes," I said.—
He faintly smiled; and then, with brow
In kneading palm, as one in dread—
His tasseled cap pushed from his head;—

"'Her voice's music,' I repeat,"
He said,—"'twas sweet—O passing sweet!—
Though she herself, in uttering
Its melody, proved not the thing
Of loveliness my dreams made meet
For me—there, yearning, at her feet—
Prone at her feet—a worshiper,—
For lo! she spake a tongue," moaned he,
"Unknown to me;—unknown to me
As mine to her—as mine to her."

211 *When I Do Mock*

WHEN I do mock the blackness of the night
With my despair—outweep the very dews
And wash my wan cheeks stark of all delight,
Denying every counsel of dear use
In mine embittered state; with infinite
Perversity, mine eyes drink in no sight
Of pleasance that nor moon nor stars refuse
In silver largess and gold twinklings bright;—
I question me what mannered brain is mine
That it doth trick me of the very food
It panteth for—the very meat and wine
That yet should plump my starvéd soul with good
And comfortable plethora of ease,
That I might drowse away such rhymes as these.

212 *Slumber-Song*

SLEEP, little one! The Twilight folds her gloom
Full tenderly about the drowsy Day,
And all his tinseled hours of light and bloom
Like toys are laid away.

Sleep! sleep! The noon-sky's airy cloud of white
Has deepened wide o'er all the azure plain;
And, trailing through the leaves, the skirts of Night
Are wet with dews as rain.

But rest thou sweetly, smiling in thy dreams,
With round fists tossed like roses o'er thy head,
And thy tranc'd lips and eyelids kissed with gleams
Of rapture perfected.

213 *"This Dear Child-Hearted Woman That is Dead"*

I

THIS woman, with the dear child-heart,
Ye mourn as dead, is—where and what?
With faith as artless as her Art,
I question not,—

But dare divine, and feel, and know
Her blessedness—as hath been writ
In allegory.—Even so
I fashion it:—

II

A stately figure, rapt and awed
In her new guise of Angelhood,
Still lingered, wistful—knowing God
Was very good.—

Her thought's fine whisper filled the pause;
And, listening, the Master smiled,
And lo! the stately angel was
—A little child.

214 *To a Jilted Swain*

GET thee back neglected friends;
And repay, as each one lends,
Tithes of shallow-sounding glee
Or keen-ringing raillery:

Get thee from lone vigils; be
But in jocund company,
Where is laughter and acclaim
Boisterous above the name.—
Get where sulking husbands sip
Ale-house cheer, with pipe at lip;
And where Mol the barmaid saith
Curst is she that marrieth.

215 *The Frog*

WHO am I but the Frog—the Frog!
My realm is the dark bayou,
And my throne is the muddy and moss-grown log
That the poison-vine clings to—
And the blacksnakes slide in the slimy tide
Where the ghost of the moon looks blue.

What am I but a King—a King!—
For the royal robes I wear—
A sceptre, too, and a signet-ring,
As vassals and serfs declare:
And a voice, god wot, that is equaled not
In the wide world anywhere!

I can talk to the Night—the Night!—
Under her big black wing
She tells me the tale of the world outright,
And the secret of everything;
For she knows you all, from the time you crawl,
To the doom that death will bring.

The Storm swoops down, and he blows—and blows,—
While I drum on his swollen cheek,
And croak in his angered eye that glows
With the lurid lightning's streak;
While the rushes drown in the watery frown
That his bursting passions leak.

And I can see through the sky—the sky—
As clear as a piece of glass;
And I can tell you the how and why
Of the things that come to pass—
And whether the dead are there instead,
Or under the graveyard grass.

To your Sovereign lord all hail—all hail!—
To your Prince on his throne so grim!
Let the moon swing low, and the high stars trail
Their heads in the dust to him;
And the wide world sing: Long live the King,
And grace to his royal whim!

216 *Out of the Hitherwhere*

OUT of the hitherwhere into the yon—
The land that the Lord's love rests upon;
Where one may rely on the friends he meets,
And the smiles that greet him along the streets:
Where the mother that left you years ago
Will lift the hands that were folded so,
And put them about you, with all the love
And tenderness you are dreaming of.

Out of the hitherwhere into the YON—
Where all of the friends of your youth have gone,—
Where the old schoolmate that laughed with you
Will laugh again as he used to do,
Running to meet you, with such a face
As lights like a moon the wondrous place
Where God is living, and glad to live,
Since He is the Master and may forgive.

Out of the hitherwhere into the YON!—
Stay the hopes we are leaning on—
You, Divine, with Your merciful eyes
Looking down from the far-away skies,—
Smile upon us, and reach and take
Our worn souls Home for the old home's sake.—
And so Amen,—for our all seems gone
Out of the hitherwhere into the YON.

217 *My Bride That is to Be*

O SOUL of mine, look out and see
My bride, my bride that is to be!—
Reach out with mad, impatient hands,
And draw aside futurity
As one might draw a veil aside—
And so unveil her where she stands
Madonna-like and glorified—
The queen of undiscovered lands
Of love, to where she beckons me—
My bride—my bride that is to be.

The shadow of a willow-tree
That wavers on a garden-wall
In summer-time may never fall
In attitude as gracefully
As my fair bride that is to be;—
Nor ever Autumn's leaves of brown
As lightly flutter to the lawn
As fall her fairy-feet upon
The path of love she loiters down.—
O'er drops of dew she walks, and yet
Not one may stain her sandal wet—
Ay, she might *dance* upon the way
Nor crush a single drop to spray,
So airy-like she seems to me,—
My bride, my bride that is to be.

I know not if her eyes are light
As summer skies or dark as night,—
I only know that they are dim
With mystery: In vain I peer
To make their hidden meaning clear,
While o'er their surface, like a tear
That ripples to the silken brim,
A look of longing seems to swim
All worn and weary-like to me;
And then, as suddenly, my sight
Is blinded with a smile so bright,
Through folded lids I still may see
My bride, my bride that is to be.

Her face is like a night of June
Upon whose brow the crescent-moon
Hangs pendent in a diadem
Of stars, with envy lighting them.—
  And, like a wild cascade, her hair
Floods neck and shoulder, arm and wrist,
Till only through a gleaming mist
  I seem to see a Siren there,
With lips of love and melody
  And open arms and heaving breast
  Wherein I fling myself to rest,
The while my heart cries hopelessly
For my fair bride that is to be.

. . . . . .

Nay, foolish heart and blinded eyes!
My bride hath need of no disguise.—
  But, rather, let her come to me
In such a form as bent above
  My pillow when, in infancy,
I knew not anything but love,—
O let her come from out the lands
  Of Womanhood—not fairy isles,—
And let her come with Woman's hands
  And Woman's eyes of tears and smiles,—
With Woman's hopefulness and grace
Of patience lighting up her face:
And let her diadem be wrought
Of kindly deed and prayerful thought,

That ever over all distress
May beam the light of cheerfulness.—
And let her feet be brave to fare
The labyrinths of doubt and care,
That, following, my own may find
The path to Heaven God designed.—
O let her come like this to me—
My bride—my bride that is to be.

218 *Through Sleepy-Land*

WHERE do you go when you go to sleep,
Little Boy! Little Boy! where?
'Way—'way in where's Little Bo-Peep,
And Little Boy Blue, and the Cows and Sheep
A-wandering 'way in there—in there—
A-wandering 'way in there!

And what do you see when lost in dreams,
Little Boy, 'way in there?
Firefly-glimmers and glow-worm gleams,
And silvery, low, slow-sliding streams,
And mermaids, smiling out—'way in where
They're a-hiding—'way in there!

Where do you go when the Fairies call,
Little Boy! Little Boy! where?
Wade through the dews of the grasses tall,
Hearing the weir and the waterfall
And the Wee-Folk—'way in there—in there—
And the Kelpies—'way in there!

And what do you do when you wake at dawn,
  Little Boy! Little Boy! what?
Hug my Mommy and kiss her on
Her smiling eyelids, sweet and wan,
  And tell her everything I've forgot
  A-wandering 'way in there—in there—
    Through the blind-world 'way in there!

219 *He and I*

JUST drifting on together—
  He and I—
As through the balmy weather
  Of July
  Drift two thistle-tufts imbedded
  Each in each—by zephyrs wedded—
  Touring upward, giddy-headed,
    For the sky.

And, veering up and onward,
    Do we seem
Forever drifting dawnward
    In a dream,
  Where we meet song-birds that know us,
  And the winds their kisses blow us,
  While the years flow far below us
    Like a stream.

And we are happy—very—
  He and I—
Aye, even glad and merry
    Though on high

The heavens are sometimes shrouded
By the midnight storm, and clouded
Till the pallid moon is crowded
From the sky.

My spirit ne'er expresses
Any choice
But to clothe him with caresses
And rejoice;
And as he laughs, it is in
Such a tone the moonbeams glisten
And the stars come out to listen
To his voice.

And so, whate'er the weather,
He and I,—
With our lives linked thus together,
Float and fly
As two thistle-tufts imbedded
Each in each—by zephyrs wedded—
Touring upward, giddy-headed,
For the sky.

220 *The Yellowbird*

HEY! my little Yellowbird,
What you doing there?
Like a flashing sun-ray,
Flitting everywhere:
Dangling down the tall weeds

And the hollyhocks,
And the lordly sunflowers
Along the garden-walks.

Ho! my gallant Golden-bill,
Pecking 'mongst the weeds,
You must have for breakfast
Golden flower-seeds:
Won't you tell a little fellow
What you have for *tea?*—
'Spect a peck o' yellow, mellow
Pippin on the tree.

221

The Blind Girl

IF I might see his face to-day!—
He is so happy now!—To hear
His laugh is like a roundelay—
So ringing-sweet and clear!
His step—I heard it long before
He bounded through the open door
To tell his marriage.—Ah! so kind—
So good he is!—And I—so blind!

But thus he always came to me—
Me, first of all, he used to bring
His sorrow to—his ecstasy—
His hopes and everything;
And if I joyed with him or wept,
It was not long *the music* slept,—
And if he sung, or if I played—
Or both,—we were the braver made.

I grew to know and understand
  His every word at every call,—
The gate-latch hinted, and his hand
  In mine confessed it all:
He need not speak one word to me—
He need not sigh—I need not see,—
But just the one touch of his palm,
And I would answer—song or psalm.

He wanted recognition—name—
  He hungered so for higher things,—
The altitudes of power and fame,
  And all that fortune brings:
Till, with his great heart fevered thus,
And aching as impetuous,
I almost wished sometimes that *he*
Were blind and patient made, like me.

But he has won!—I knew he would.—
  Once in the mighty Eastern mart,
I knew his music only could
  Be sung in every heart!
And when he proudly sent me this
From out the great metropolis,
I bent above the graven score
And, weeping, kissed it o'er and o'er.—

And yet not blither sing the birds
  Than this glad melody,—the tune
As sweetly wedded with the words
  As flowers with middle-June;

Had he not *told* me, I had known
It was composed of love alone—
His love for *her*.—And she can see
His happy face eternally!—

While *I*—O God, forgive, I pray!—
  Forgive me that I did so long
To look upon his face to-day!—
  I know the wish was wrong.—
Yea, I am thankful that my sight
Is shielded safe from such delight:—
I can pray better, with this blur
Of blindness—both for him and her.

222

Dreamer, Say

DREAMER, say, will you dream for me
  A wild sweet dream of a foreign land,
Whose border sips of a foaming sea
  With lips of coral and silver sand;
Where warm winds loll on the shady deeps,
  Or lave themselves in the tearful mist
The great wild wave of the breaker weeps
  O'er crags of opal and amethyst?

Dreamer, say, will you dream a dream
  Of tropic shades in the lands of shine,
Where the lily leans o'er an amber stream
  That flows like a rill of wasted wine,—

Where the palm-trees, lifting their shields of green,
  Parry the shafts of the Indian sun
Whose splintering vengeance falls between
  The reeds below where the waters run?

Dreamer, say, will you dream of love
  That lives in a land of sweet perfume,
Where the stars drip down from the skies above
  In molten spatters of bud and bloom?
Where never the weary eyes are wet,
  And never a sob in the balmy air,
And only the laugh of the paroquet
  Breaks the sleep of the silence there?

223 *An Empty Glove*

I

AN empty glove—long withering in the grasp
  Of Time's cold palm. I lift it to my lips,—
And lo, once more I thrill beneath its clasp,
  In fancy, as with odorous finger-tips
  It reaches from the years that used to be
  And proffers back love, life and all, to me.

II

Ah! beautiful she was beyond belief:
  Her face was fair and lustrous as the moon's;
Her eyes—too large for small delight or grief,—
  The smiles of them were Laughter's afternoons;

Their tears were April showers, and their love—
All sweetest speech swoons ere it speaks thereof.

III

White-fruited cocoa shown against the shell
Were not so white as was her brow below
The cloven tresses of the hair that fell
Across her neck and shoulders of nude snow;
Her cheeks—chaste pallor, with a crimson stain—
Her mouth was like a red rose rinsed with rain.

IV

And this was she my fancy held as good—
As fair and lovable—in every wise
As peerless in pure worth of womanhood
As was her wondrous beauty in men's eyes.—
Yet, all alone, I kiss this empty glove—
The poor husk of the hand I loved—and love.

224 *Our Own.*

THEY walk here with us, hand-in-hand;
We gossip, knee-by-knee;
They tell us all that they have planned—
Of all their joys to be,—
And, laughing, leave us: And, to-day,
All desolate we cry
Across wide waves of voiceless graves—
Good-bye! Good-bye! Good-bye!

225 *Leonainie*

LEONAINIE—Angels named her;
And they took the light
Of the laughing stars and framed her
In a smile of white;
And they made her hair of gloomy
Midnight, and her eyes of bloomy
Moonshine, and they brought her to me
In the solemn night.—

In a solemn night of summer,
When my heart of gloom
Blossomed up to greet the comer
Like a rose in bloom;
All forebodings that distressed me
I forgot as Joy caressed me—
(*Lying* Joy! that caught and pressed me
In the arms of doom!)

Only spake the little lisper
In the Angel-tongue;
Yet I, listening, heard her whisper,—
"Songs are only sung
Here below that they may grieve you—
Tales but told you to deceive you,—
So must Leonainie leave you
While her love is young."

Then God smiled and it was morning.
Matchless and supreme
Heaven's glory seemed adorning
Earth with its esteem:

Every heart but mine seemed gifted
With the voice of prayer, and lifted
Where my Leonainie drifted
From me like a dream.

226 *A Windy Day*

THE dawn was a dawn of splendor,
And the blue of the morning skies
Was as placid and deep and tender
As the blue of a baby's eyes;
The sunshine flooded the mountain,
And flashed over land and sea
Like the spray of a glittering fountain.—
But the wind—the wind—Ah me!

Like a weird invisible spirit,
It swooped in its airy flight;
And the earth, as the stress drew near it,
Quailed as in mute affright;
The grass in the green fields quivered—
The waves of the smitten brook
Chillily shuddered and shivered,
And the reeds bowed down and shook.

Like a sorrowful miserere
It sobbed, and it blew and blew
Till the leaves on the trees looked weary,
And my prayers were weary, too;

And then, like the sunshine's glimmer
That failed in the awful strain,
All the hope of my eyes grew dimmer
In a spatter of spiteful rain.

227

Envoy

WHEN but a little boy, it seemed
My dearest rapture ran
In fancy ever, when I dreamed
I was a man—a man!

Now—sad perversity!—my theme
Of rarest, purest joy
Is when, in fancy blest, I dream
I am a little boy.

Lincoln

A PEACEFUL life;—just toil and rest—
All his desire;—
To read the books he liked the best
Beside the cabin fire—
God's word and man's;—to peer sometimes
Above the page, in smouldering gleams,
And catch, like far heroic rhymes,
The onmarch of his dreams.

A peaceful life;—to hear the low
Of pastured herds,
Or woodman's ax that, blow on blow,
Fell sweet as rhythmic words.
And yet there stirred within his breast
A fateful pulse that, like a roll
Of drums, made high above his rest
A tumult in his soul.

A peaceful life! . . . They haled him even
As One was haled
Whose open palms were nailed toward Heaven
When prayers nor aught availed.
And, lo, he paid the selfsame price
To lull a nation's awful strife
And will us, through the sacrifice
Of self, his peaceful life.

229 *Let Something Good be Said*

WHEN over the fair fame of friend or foe
The shadow of disgrace shall fall, instead
Of words of blame, or proof of thus and so,
Let something good be said.

Forget not that no fellow-being yet
May fall so low but love may lift his head:
Even the cheek of shame with tears is wet,
If something good be said.

No generous heart may vainly turn aside
In ways of sympathy; no soul so dead
But may awaken strong and glorified,
If something good be said.

And so I charge ye, by the thorny crown,
And by the cross on which the Saviour bled,
And by your own souls' hope of fair renown,
Let something good be said!

230 *Your Height is Ours*

TO RICHARD HENRY STODDARD, AT THE STODDARD BANQUET BY THE AUTHORS' CLUB, NEW YORK, MARCH 25, 1897

O PRINCELY poet!—kingly heir
Of gifts divinely sent,—
Your own!—nor envy anywhere,
Nor voice of discontent.

Though, of ourselves, all poor are we,
And frail and weak of wing,
Your height is ours—your ecstasy—
Your glory, when you sing.

Most favored of the gods, and great
In gifts beyond our store,
We covet not your rich estate,
But prize our own the more.—

The gods give as but gods may do—
We count *our* riches thus,—
They gave their richest gifts to you,
And then gave you to us.

231 *"O Life! O Beyond!"*

STRANGE—strange, O mortal Life,
The perverse gifts that came to me from you!
From childhood I have wanted *all* good things:
You gave me few.

You gave me faith in One—
Divine—above your own imperious might,
O mortal Life, while I but wanted you
And your delight.

I wanted dancing feet,
And flowery, grassy paths by laughing streams;
You gave me loitering steps, and eyes all blurred
With tears and dreams.

I wanted love,—and, lo!
As though in mockery, you gave me loss.
O'erburdened sore, I wanted rest: you gave
The heavier cross.

I wanted one poor hut
For mine own home, to creep away into:
You gave me only lonelier desert lands
To journey through.

Now, at the last vast verge
Of barren age, I stumble, reel, and fling
Me down, with strength all spent and heart athirst
And famishing.

Yea, now, Life, deal me death,—
Your worst—your vaunted worst! . . . Across my breast
With numb and fumbling hands I gird me for
The best.

232 *Emerson*

CONCORD, APRIL 27, 1882

WHAT shall we say? In quietude,
Within his home, in dreams unguessed,
He lies; the grief a nation would
Evince must be repressed.

Nor meet is it the loud acclaim
  His countrymen would raise—that he
Has left the riches of his fame
    The whole world's legacy.

Then, prayerful, let us pause until
  We find, as grateful spirits can,
The way most worthy to fulfil
    The tribute due the man.

Think what were best in his regard
  Who voyaged life in such a cause:
Our simplest faith were best reward—
    Our silence, best applause.

233 *Hymn Exultant*

FOR EASTER

VOICE of Mankind, sing over land and sea—
  Sing, in this glorious morn!
The long, long night is gone from Calvary—
  The cross, the thong and thorn;
The sealéd tomb yields up its saintly guest,
No longer to be burdened and oppressed.

Heart of Mankind, thrill answer to His own,
  So human, yet divine!
For earthly love He left His heavenly throne—
  For love like thine and mine—
For love of us, as one might kiss a bride,
His lifted lips touched death's, all satisfied.

Soul of Mankind, He wakes—He lives once more!
O soul, with heart and voice
Sing! sing!—the stone rolls chorus from the door—
Our Lord stands forth,—Rejoice!
Rejoice, O garden-land of song and flowers;
Our King returns to us, forever ours!

234 *The Name of Old Glory*

1898

I

OLD GLORY! say, who,
By the ships and the crew,
And the long, blended ranks of the gray and the blue,
Who gave you, Old Glory, the name that you bear
With such pride everywhere
As you cast yourself free to the rapturous air
And leap out full-length, as we're wanting you to?—
Who gave you that name, with the ring of the same,
And the honor and fame so becoming to you?—
Your stripes stroked in ripples of white and of red,
With your stars at their glittering best overhead—
By day or by night
Their delightfulest light
Laughing down from their little square heaven of blue!—
Who gave you the name of Old Glory?—say, who—
Who gave you the name of Old Glory?

The old banner lifted, and faltering then
In vague lisps and whispers fell silent again.

II

Old Glory,—speak out!—we are asking about
How you happened to "favor" a name, so to say,
That sounds so familiar and careless and gay
As we cheer it and shout in our wild breezy way—
We—the *crowd,* every man of us, calling you that—
We—Tom, Dick, and Harry—each swinging his hat
And hurrahing "Old Glory!" like you were our kin,
When—*Lord!*—we all know we're as common as sin!
And yet it just seems like you *humor* us all
And waft us your thanks, as we hail you and fall
Into line, with you over us, waving us on
Where our glorified, sanctified betters have gone.—
And this is the reason we're wanting to know—
(And we're wanting it *so!*—
Where our own fathers went we are willing to go.)—
Who gave you the name of Old Glory—O-ho!—
Who gave you the name of Old Glory?

The old flag unfurled with a billowy thrill
For an instant, then wistfully sighed and was still.

III

Old Glory: the story we're wanting to hear
Is what the plain facts of your christening were,—
For your name—just to hear it,
Repeat it, and cheer it, 's a tang to the spirit
As salt as a tear;—
And seeing you fly, and the boys marching by,
There's a shout in the throat and a blur in the eye
And an aching to live for you always—or die,
If, dying, we still keep you waving on high.

And so, by our love
For you, floating above,
And the scars of all wars and the sorrows thereof,
Who gave you the name of Old Glory, and why
Are we thrilled at the name of Old Glory?

Then the old banner leaped, like a sail in the blast,
And fluttered an audible answer at last.—

IV

And it spake, with a shake of the voice, and it said:—
By the driven snow-white and the living blood-red
Of my bars, and their heaven of stars overhead—
By the symbol conjoined of them all, skyward cast,
As I float from the steeple, or flap at the mast,
Or droop o'er the sod where the long grasses nod,—
My name is as old as the glory of God.
. . . So I came by the name of Old Glory.

235 *As Created*

THERE'S a space for good to bloom in
Every heart of man or woman,—
And however wild or human,
Or however brimmed with gall,
Never heart may beat without it;
And the darkest heart to doubt it
Has something good about it
After all.

236 *A Song of the Road*

O I WILL walk with you, my lad, whichever way you fare,
You'll have me, too, the side o' you, with heart as light as air;
No care for where the road you take's a-leadin'—*any*where,—
It can but be a joyful jant the whilst *you* journey there.
The road you take's the path o' love, an' that's the bridth o' two—
And I will walk with you, my lad—O I will walk with you.

Ho! I will walk with you, my lad,
Be weather black or blue
Or roadsides frost or dew, my lad—
O I will walk with you.

Aye glad, my lad, I'll walk with you, whatever winds may blow,
Or summer blossoms stay our steps, or blinding drifts of snow;
The way that you set face and foot's the way that I will go,
And brave I'll be, abreast o' you, the Saints and Angels know!
With loyal hand in loyal hand, and one heart made o' two,
Through summer's gold, or winter's cold, it's I will walk with you.

Sure, I will walk with you, my lad,
As love ordains me to,—
To Heaven's door, and through, my lad,
O I will walk with you.

237 *To the Judge*

A VOICE FROM THE INTERIOR OF OLD HOOP-POLE TOWNSHIP

FRIEND of my earliest youth,
Can't you arrange to come down
And visit a fellow out here in the woods—
Out of the dust of the town?
Can't you forget you're a Judge
And put by your dolorous frown
And tan your wan face in the smile of a friend—
Can't you arrange to come down?

Can't you forget for a while
The arguments prosy and drear,—
To lean at full-length in indefinite rest
In the lap of the greenery here?
Can't you kick over "the Bench,"
And "husk" yourself out of your gown
To dangle your legs where the fishing is good—
Can't you arrange to come down?

Bah! for your office of State!
And bah! for its technical lore!
What does our President, high in his chair,
But wish himself low as before!
Pick between peasant and king,—
Poke your bald head through a crown
Or shadow it here with the laurels of Spring!—
Can't you arrange to come down?

"Judge it" out *here*, if you will,—
The birds are in session by dawn;
You can draw, not *complaints*, but a sketch of the hill
And a breath that your betters have drawn;

You can open your heart, like a case,
To a jury of kine, white and brown,
And their verdict of "Moo" will just satisfy you!—
Can't you arrange to come down?

Can't you arrange it, old Pard?—
Pigeonhole Blackstone and Kent!—
Here we have "Breitmann," and Ward,
Twain, Burdette, Nye, and content!
Can't you forget you're a Judge
And put by your dolorous frown
And tan your wan face in the smile of a friend—
Can't you arrange to come down?

238 *Henry W. Grady*

ATLANTA, DECEMBER 23, 1889

TRUE-HEARTED friend of all true friendliness!—
Brother of all true brotherhoods!—Thy hand
And its late pressure now we understand
Most fully, as it falls thus gestureless
And Silence lulls thee into sweet excess
Of sleep. Sleep thou content!—Thy loved Southland
Is swept with tears, as rain in sunshine; and
Through all the frozen North our eyes confess
Like sorrow—seeing still the princely sign
Set on thy lifted brow, and the rapt light
Of the dark, tender, melancholy eyes—
Thrilled with the music of those lips of thine,
And yet the fire thereof that lights the night
With the white splendor of thy prophecies.

239 *From Delphi to Camden*

I

FROM Delphi to Camden—little Hoosier towns,—
But here were classic meadows, blooming dales and downs;
And here were grassy pastures, dewy as the leas
Trampled over by the trains of royal pageantries!

And here the winding highway loitered through the shade
Of the hazel-covert, where, in ambuscade,
Loomed the larch and linden, and the greenwood-tree
Under which bold Robin Hood loud hallooed to me!

Here the stir and riot of the busy day
Dwindled to the quiet of the breath of May;
Gurgling brooks, and ridges lily-marged and spanned
By the rustic bridges found in Wonderland!

II

From Delphi to Camden,—from Camden back again!—
And now the night was on us, and the lightning and the rain;
And still the way was wondrous with the flash of hill and plain,—
The stars like printed asterisks—the moon a murky stain!

And I thought of tragic idyl, and of flight and hot pursuit,
And the jingle of the bridle and cuirass, and spur on boot,
As our horses' hooves struck showers from the flinty bowlders set
In freshet-ways of writhing reed and drowning violet.

And we passed beleaguered castles, with their battlements
a-frown;
Where a tree fell in the forest was a turret toppled down;
While my master and commander—the brave knight I gal-
loped with
On this reckless road to ruin or to fame was—Dr. Smith!

240 *The Naturalist*

OLIVER DAVIE

IN gentlest worship has he bowed
To Nature. Rescued from the crowd
And din of town and thoroughfare,
He turns him from all worldly care
Unto the sacred fastness of
The forests, and the peace and love
That breathes there prayer-like in the breeze
And coo of doves in dreamful trees—
Their tops in laps of sunshine laid,
Their lower boughs all slaked with shade.

With head uncovered has he stood,
Hearing the Spirit of the Wood—
Hearing aright the Master speak
In trill of bird, and warbling creek;
In lisp of reeds, or rainy sigh
Of grasses as the loon darts by—
Hearing aright the storm and lull,
And all earth's voices wonderful,—
Even this hail an unknown friend
Lifts will he hear and comprehend.

241 *One With a Song*

FRANK L. STANTON

HE sings: and his song is heard,
Pure as a joyous prayer,
Because he sings of the simple things—
The fields, and the open air,
The orchard-bough, and the mockingbird,
And the blossoms everywhere.

He sings of a wealth we hold
In common ownership—
The wildwood nook, and the laugh of the brook,
And the dewdrop's drip and drip,
The love of the lily's heart of gold,
And the kiss of the rose's lip.

The universal heart
Leans listening to his lay
That glints and gleams with the glimmering dreams
Of children at their play—
A lay as rich with unconscious art
As the first song-bird's of May.

Ours every rapturous tone
Of every song of glee,
Because his voice makes native choice
Of Nature's harmony—
So that his singing seems our own,
And ours his ecstasy.

Steadfastly, bravely glad
Above all earthly stress,
He lifts his line to heights divine,

And, singing, ever says,—
This is a better world than bad—
God's love is limitless.

He sings: and his song is heard,
Pure as a joyous prayer,
Because he sings of the simple things—
The fields, and the open air,
The orchard-bough, and the mockingbird,
And the blossoms everywhere.

242

On a Fly-Leaf

IN JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY'S POEMS

SINGERS there are of courtly themes—
Drapers in verse—who would dress their rhymes
In robes of ermine; and singers of dreams
Of gods high-throned in the classic times;
Singers of nymphs, in their dim retreats,
Satyrs, with scepter and diadem;
But the singer who sings as a man's heart beats
Well may blush for the rest of them.

I like the thrill of such poems as these,—
All spirit and fervor of splendid fact—
Pulse, and muscle, and arteries
Of living, heroic thought and act!—
Where every line is a vein of red
And rapturous blood all unconfined
As it leaps from a heart that has joyed and bled
With the rights and the wrongs of all mankind.

243 *Oscar C. McCulloch*

INDIANAPOLIS, DECEMBER 12, 1891

WHAT would best please our friend, in token of
The sense of our great loss?—Our sighs and tears?
Nay, these he fought against through all his years,
Heroically voicing, high above
Grief's ceaseless minor, moaning like a dove,
The pæan triumphant that the soldier hears,
Scaling the walls of death, midst shouts and cheers,
The old Flag laughing in his eyes' last love.

Nay, then, to pleasure him were it not meet
To yield him bravely, as his fate arrives?—
Drape him in radiant roses, head and feet,
And be partakers, while his work survives,
Of his fair fame,—paying the tribute sweet
To all humanity—our nobler lives.

244 *The Sermon of the Rose*

WILFUL we are, in our infirmity
Of childish questioning and discontent.
Whate'er befalls us is divinely meant—
Thou Truth the clearer for thy mystery!
Make us to meet what is or is to be
With fervid welcome, knowing it is sent
To serve us in some way full excellent,
Though we discern it all belatedly.
The rose buds, and the rose blooms, and the rose
Bows in the dews, and in its fullness, lo,
Is in the lover's hand,—then on the breast
Of her he loves,—and there dies. And who knows

What fate of all a rose may undergo
Is fairest, dearest, sweetest, loveliest?

Nay, we are children: we will not mature.
A blessed gift must seem a theft; and tears
Must storm our eyes when but a joy appears
In drear disguise of sorrow; and how poor
We seem when we are richest,—most secure
Against all poverty the lifelong years
We yet must waste in childish doubts and fears
That, in despite of reason, still endure!
Alas! the sermon of the rose we will
Not wisely ponder; nor the sobs of grief
Lulled into sighs of rapture, nor the cry
Of fierce defiance that again is still.
Be patient—patient with our frail belief,
And stay it yet a little ere we die.

O opulent life of ours, though dispossessed
Of treasure after treasure! Youth most fair
Went first, but left its priceless coil of hair—
Moaned over, sleepless nights, kissed and caressed
Through drip and blur of tears the tenderest.
And next went Love—the ripe rose glowing there,
Her very sister! . . . *It* is here, but where
Is *she,* of all the world the first and best?
And yet how sweet the sweet earth after rain—
How sweet the sunlight on the garden-wall
Across the roses—and how sweetly flows
The limpid yodel of the brook again!
And yet—and yet how sweeter, after all,
The smoldering sweetness of a dead red rose.

245 *What the Wind Said*

I MUSE to-day, in a listless way,
In the gleam of a summer land:
I close my eyes as a lover may
At the touch of his sweetheart's hand,
And I hear these things in the whisperings
Of the zephyrs round me fanned:—

I am the Wind, and I rule mankind,
And I hold a sovereign reign
Over the lands, as God designed,
And the waters they contain:
Lo! the bound of the wide world round
Falleth in my domain!

I was born on a stormy morn
In a kingdom walled with snow,
Whose crystal cities laugh to scorn
The proudest the world can show;
And the daylight's glare is frozen there
In the breath of the blasts that blow.

Life to me was a jubilee
From the first of my youthful days:
Clinking my icy toys with glee—
Playing my childish plays;
Filling my hands with the silver sands
To scatter a thousand ways:

Chasing the flakes that the Polar shakes
From his shaggy coat of white,
Or hunting the trace of the track he makes

And sweeping it from sight,
As he turned to glare from the slippery stair
Of the iceberg's farthest height.

Till I grew so strong that I strayed ere long
From my home of ice and chill;
With an eager heart and a merry song
I traveled the snows until
I heard the thaws in the ice-crag's jaws
Crunched with a hungry will;

And the angry crash of the waves that dash
Themselves on the jaggèd shore
Where the splintered masts of the ice-wrecks flash,
And the frightened breakers roar
In wild unrest on the ocean's breast
For a thousand leagues or more.

And the grand old sea invited me
With a million beckoning hands,
And I spread my wings for a flight as free
As ever a sailor plans
When his thoughts are wild and his heart beguiled
With the dreams of foreign lands.

I passed a ship on its homeward trip,
With a weary and toil-worn crew;
And I kissed their flag with a welcome lip,
And so glad a gale I blew
That the sailors quaffed their grog and laughed
At the work I made them do.

I drifted by where sea-groves lie
Like brides in the fond caress
Of the warm sunshine and the tender sky—
Where the ocean, passionless
And tranquil, lies like a child whose eyes
Are blurred with drowsiness.

I drank the air and the perfume there,
And bathed in a fountain's spray;
And I smoothed the wings and the plumage rare
Of a bird for his roundelay,
And fluttered a rag from a signal-crag
For a wretched castaway.

With a sea-gull resting on my breast,
I launched on a madder flight:
And I lashed the waves to a wild unrest,
And howled with a fierce delight
Till the daylight slept; and I wailed and wept
Like a fretful babe all night.

For I heard the boom of a gun strike doom;
And the gleam of a blood-red star
Glared at me through the mirk and gloom
From the lighthouse tower afar;
And I held my breath at the shriek of death
That came from the harbor bar.

For I am the Wind, and I rule mankind,
And I hold a sovereign reign
Over the lands, as God designed,

And the waters they contain:
Lo! the bound of the wide world round
Falleth in my domain!

I journeyed on, when the night was gone,
O'er a coast of oak and pine;
And I followed a path that a stream had drawn
Through a land of vale and vine,
And here and there was a village fair
In a nest of shade and shine.

I passed o'er lakes where the sunshine shakes
And shivers his golden lance
On the glittering shield of the wave that breaks
Where the fish-boats dip and dance,
And the trader sails where the mist unveils
The glory of old romance.

I joyed to stand where the jeweled hand
Of the maiden-morning lies
On the tawny brow of the mountain-land,
Where the eagle shrieks and cries,
And holds his throne to himself alone
From the light of human eyes.

Adown deep glades where the forest shades
Are dim as the dusk of day—
Where only the foot of the wild beast wades,
Or the Indian dares to stray,
As the blacksnakes glide through the reeds and hide
In the swamp-depths grim and gray.

And I turned and fled from the place of dread
  To the far-off haunts of men.
"In the city's heart is rest," I said,—
  But I found it not, and when
I saw but care and vice reign there
  I was filled with wrath again:

And I blew a spark in the midnight dark
  Till it flashed to an angry flame
And scarred the sky with a lurid mark
  As red as the blush of shame:
And a hint of hell was the dying yell
  That up from the ruins came.

The bells went wild, and the black smoke piled
  Its pillars against the night,
Till I gathered them, like flocks defiled,
  And scattered them left and right,
While the holocaust's red tresses tossed
  As a maddened Fury's might.

"Ye overthrown!" did I jeer and groan—
  "Ho! who is your master?—say!—
Ye shapes that writhe in the slag and moan
  Your slow-charred souls away—
Ye worse than worst of things accurst—
  Ye dead leaves of a day!"

I am the Wind, and I rule mankind,
  And I hold a sovereign reign
Over the lands, as God designed,

And the waters they contain:
Lo! the bound of the wide world round
Falleth in my domain!

. . . . . .

I wake, as one from a dream half done,
And gaze with a dazzled eye
On an autumn leaf like a scrap of sun
That the wind goes whirling by,
While afar I hear, with a chill of fear,
The winter storm-king sigh.

246 *On a Youthful Portrait of Stevenson*

A FACE of youth mature; a mouth of tender,
Sad, human sympathy, yet something stoic
In clasp of lip: wide eyes of calmest splendor,
And brow serenely ample and heroic:—
The features—all—lit with a soul ideal . . .
O visionary boy! what were you seeing,
What hearing, as you stood thus midst the real
Ere yet one master-work of yours had being?

Is it a foolish fancy that we humor—
Investing daringly with life and spirit
This youthful portrait of you ere one rumor
Of your great future spoke that men might hear it?—
Is it a fancy, or your first of glories,
That you were listening, and the camera drew you
Hearing the voices of your untold stories
And all your lovely poems calling to you?

247

The Loving Cup

TRANCED in the glamour of a dream
Where banquet-lights and fancies gleam,
And ripest wit and wine abound,
And pledges hale go round and round,—
Lo, dazzled with enchanted rays—
As in the golden olden days
Sir Galahad—my eyes swim up
To greet your splendor, Loving Cup!

What is the secret of your art,
Linking together hand and heart
Your myriad votaries who do
Themselves most honor honoring you?
What gracious service have you done
To win the name that you have won?—
Kissing it back from tuneful lips
That sing your praise between the sips!

Your spicy breath, O Loving Cup,
That, like an incense steaming up,
Full-freighted with a fragrance fine
As ever swooned on sense of mine,
Is rare enough.—But then, ah me!
How rarer every memory
That, rising with it, wreathes and blends
In forms and faces of my friends!

O Loving Cup! in fancy still,
I clasp their hands, and feel the thrill
Of fellowship that still endures
While lips are theirs and wine is yours!

And while my memory journeys down
The years that lead to Boston Town,
Abide where first were rendered up
Our mutual loves, O Loving Cup!

248 *The Onward Trail*

MYRON W. REED, DENVER, JANUARY 30, 1899

JUST as of old,—with fearless foot
And placid face and resolute,
He takes the faint, mysterious trail
That leads beyond our earthly hail.

We would cry, as in last farewell,
But that his hand waves, and a spell
Is laid upon our tongues: and thus
He takes unworded leave of us.

And it is fitting:—As he fared
Here with us, so is he prepared
For any fortuning the night
May hold for him beyond our sight.

The moon and stars they still attend
His wandering footsteps to the end,—
He did not question, nor will we,
Their guidance and security.

So, never parting word nor cry:—
We feel, with him, that by and by
Our onward trails will meet and then
Merge and be ever one again.

249 *A Peace-Hymn of the Republic*

LOUISVILLE, KY., SEPT. 12, 1895: 29TH ENCAMPMENT, G. A. R.

THERE'S a Voice across the Nation like a mighty ocean-hail,
Borne up from out the Southward as the seas before the gale;
Its breath is in the streaming Flag and in the flying sail—
As we go sailing on.

'Tis a Voice that we remember—ere its summons soothed as now—
When it rang in battle-challenge, and we answered vow with vow,—
With roar of gun and hiss of sword and crash of prow and prow,
As we went sailing on.

Our hope sank, even as we saw the sun sink faint and far,—
The Ship of State went groping through the blinding smoke of War—
Through blackest midnight lurching, all uncheered of moon or star,
Yet sailing—sailing on.

As One who spake the dead awake, with life-blood leaping warm—
Who walked the troubled waters, all unscathed, in mortal form,—
We felt our Pilot's presence with His hand upon the storm,
As we went sailing on.

O Voice of passion lulled to peace, this dawning of To-
day—
O Voices twain now blent as one, ye sing all fears away,
Since foe and foe are friends, and lo! the Lord, as glad
as they.—
He sends us sailing on.

250 *At Crown Hill*

LEAVE him here in the fresh greening grasses and trees
And the symbols of love, and the solace of these—
The saintly white lilies and blossoms he keeps
In endless caress as he breathlessly sleeps.
The tears of our eyes wrong the scene of his rest,
For the sky's at its clearest—the sun's at its best—
The earth at its greenest—its wild bud-and-bloom
At its sweetest—and sweetest its honey'd perfume.
Home! home!—Leave him here in his lordly estate,
And with never a tear as we turn from the gate!

Turn back to the home that will know him no more,—
The vines at the window—the sun through the door.—
Nor sound of his voice, nor the light of his face! . . . .
But the birds will sing on, and the rose, in his place,
Will tenderly smile till we daringly feign
He is home with us still, though the tremulous rain
Of our tears reappear, and again all is gloom,
And all prayerless we sob in the long-darkened room.
Heaven portions it thus—the old mystery dim,—
It is midnight to us—it is morning to him.

251 *The Enduring*

A MISTY memory—faint, far away
And vague and dim as childhood's long-lost day—
Forever haunts and holds me with a spell
Of awe and wonder indefinable:—
A grimy old engraving tacked upon
A shoe-shop wall.—An ancient temple, drawn
Of crumbling granite, sagging portico,
And gray, forbidding gateway, grim as woe;
And o'er the portal, cut in antique line,
The words—cut likewise in this brain of mine—
"Wouldst have a friend?—Wouldst know what friend is best?
Have God thy friend: He passeth all the rest."

Again the old shoemaker pounds and pounds
Resentfully, as the loud laugh resounds
And the coarse jest is bandied round the throng
That smokes about the smoldering stove; and long,
Tempestuous disputes arise, and then—
Even as all like discords—die again;
The while a barefoot boy more gravely heeds
The quaint old picture, and tiptoeing reads
There in the rainy gloom the legend o'er
The lowering portal of the old church door—
"Wouldst have a friend?—Wouldst know what friend is best?
Have God thy friend: He passeth all the rest."

So older—older—older, year by year,
The boy has grown, that now, an old man here,

He seems a part of Allegory, where
He stands before Life as the old print there—
Still awed, and marveling what light must be
Hid by the door that bars Futurity:—
Though, ever clearer than with eyes of youth,
He reads with his *old* eyes—and tears forsooth—
"Wouldst have a friend?—Wouldst know what friend is
best?
Have God thy friend: He passeth all the rest."

252 *The Mother Sainted*

AND yet she does not stir,—
Such silence weighs on her
We hear the drip
Of tear-drops as we press
Our kisses answerless
On brow and lip.

Not even the yearning touch
Of lips she loved so much
She made their breath
One with her own, will she
Give answer to and be
Wooed back from death.

And though he kneel and plead
Who was her greatest need,
And on her cheek
Lay the soft baby-face
In its old resting-place,
She will not speak.

253

The Old Guitar

NEGLECTED now is the old guitar
And mouldering into decay;
Fretted with many a rift and scar
That the dull dust hides away,
While the spider spins a silver star
In its silent lips to-day.

The keys hold only nerveless strings—
The sinews of brave old airs
Are pulseless now; and the scarf that clings
So closely here declares
A sad regret in its ravelings
And the faded hue it wears.

But the old guitar, with a lenient grace,
Has cherished a smile for me;
And its features hint of a fairer face
That comes with a memory
Of a flower-and-perfume-haunted place
And a moonlit balcony.

Music sweeter than words confess,
Or the minstrel's powers invent,
Thrilled here once at the light caress
Of the fairy hands that lent
This excuse for the kiss I press
On the dear old instrument.

The rose of pearl with the jeweled stem
Still blooms; and the tiny sets
In the circle all are here; the gem
In the keys, and the silver frets;

But the dainty fingers that danced o'er them—
Alas for the heart's regrets!—

Alas for the loosened strings to-day,
And the wounds of rift and scar
On a worn old heart, with its roundelay
Enthralled with a stronger bar
That Fate weaves on, through a dull decay
Like that of the old guitar!

254 *Red Riding-Hood*

SWEET little myth of the nursery story—
Earliest love of mine infantile breast,
Be something tangible, bloom in thy glory
Into existence, as thou art addressed!
Hasten! appear to me, guileless and good—
Thou art so dear to me, Red Riding-Hood!

Azure-blue eyes, in a marvel of wonder,
Over the dawn of a blush breaking out;
Sensitive nose, with a little smile under
Trying to hide in a blossoming pout—
Couldn't be serious, try as you would,
Little mysterious Red Riding-Hood!

Hah! little girl, it is desolate, lonely,
Out in this gloomy old forest of Life!—
Here are not pansies and buttercups only—
Brambles and briers as keen as a knife;
And a Heart, ravenous, trails in the wood
For the meal have he must,—Red Riding-Hood!

255 *At His Wintry Tent*

SAMUEL RICHARDS—ARTIST—DENVER, COLORADO

NOT only master of his art was he,
But master of his spirit—winged indeed
For lordliest height, yet poised for lowliest need
Of those, alas! upheld less buoyantly.
He gloried even in adversity,
And won his country's plaudits, and the meed
Of Old World praise, as one loath to succeed
While others were denied like victory.
Though passed, I count him still my master-friend,
Invincible as through his mortal fight,—
The laughing light of faith still in his eye
As, at his wintry tent, pitched at the end
Of life, he gaily called to me "Good night,
Old friend, good night—for there is no good-bye."

256 *Say Something to Me*

SAY something to me! I've waited so long—
Waited and wondered in vain;
Only a sentence would fall like a song
Over this listening pain—
Over a silence that glowers and frowns,—
Even my pencil to-night
Slips in the dews of my sorrow and wounds
Each tender word that I write.

Say something to me—if only to tell
Me you remember the past;
Let the sweet words, like the notes of a bell,
Ring out my vigil at last.

O it were better, far better than this
  Doubt and distrust in the breast,—
For in the wine of a fanciful kiss
  I could taste Heaven, and—rest.

Say something to me! I kneel and I plead,
  In my wild need, for a word;
If my poor heart from this silence were freed,
  I could soar up like a bird
In the glad morning, and twitter and sing,
  Carol and warble and cry
Blithe as the lark as he cruises awing
  Over the deeps of the sky.

257 *The Noblest Service*

DR. WYCKLIFFE SMITH, LATE SURGEON 161st REGIMENT INDIANA VOLUNTEERS, DELPHI, DECEMBER 29, 1899

IF all his mourning friends unselfishly
  Might speak, high over grief, in one accord,
What voice of joy were lifted to the Lord
For having lent our need such ministry
As this man's life has ever proved to be!
  Yea, even through battle-crash of gun and sword
  His steadfast step still found the pathway toward
The noblest service paid Humanity.
O ye to whose rich firesides he has brought
  A richer light! O watcher at the door
Of the lone cabin! O kindred! Comrades!—all!
Since universal good he dreamed and wrought,
  Be brave, to pleasure him, as, on before,
He leads us, answering Glory's highest call.

258 *The Ban*

I

STRANGE dreams of what I used to be,
And what I dreamed I *would* be, swim
Before my vision, faint and dim
As misty distances we see
In pictured scenes of fairy-lands;
And ever on, with empty hands,
And eyes that ever lie to me,
And smiles that no one understands,
I grope adown my destiny.

II

Some say I waver as I walk
Along the crowded thoroughfares;
And some leer in my eyes, and talk
Of dullness, while I see in theirs—
Like fishes' eyes, alive or dead—
But surfaces of vacancy—
Blank disks that never seem to see,
But glint and glow and glare instead.

III

The ragged shawl I wear is wet
With driving, dripping rains, and yet
It seems a royal raiment, where,
Through twisted torrents of my hair,
I see rare gems that gleam and shine
Like jewels in a stream of wine;

The gaping shoes that clothe my feet
Are golden sandals, and the shrine
Where courtiers grovel and repeat
Vain prayers, and where, in joy thereat,
A fair Prince doffs his plumèd hat,
And kneels, and names me all things sweet.

IV

Sometimes the sun shines, and the lull
Of winter noon is like a tune
The stars might twinkle to the moon
If night were white and beautiful—
For when the clangor of the town
And strife of traffic softens down,
The wakeful hunger that I nurse,
In listening, forgets to curse,
Until—ah, joy! with drooping head
I drowse, and dream that I am dead
And buried safe beyond their eyes
Who either pity or despise.

259 *The Edge of the Wind*

YE stars in ye skies seem twinkling
In icicles of light,
And ye edge of ye wind cuts keener
Than ever ye sword-edge might;
Ye footsteps crunch in ye courtway,
And ye trough and ye cask go "ping!"—
Ye china cracks in ye pantry,
And ye crickets cease to sing.

260 *Eugene Field*

WITH gentlest tears, no less than jubilee
Of blithest joy, we heard him, and still hear
Him singing on, with full voice, pure and clear,
Uplifted, as some classic melody
In sweetest legends of old minstrelsy;
Or, swarming Elfin-like upon the ear,
His airy notes make all the atmosphere
One blur of bird and bee and lullaby.
His tribute:—Lustre in the faded bloom
Of cheeks of old, old mothers; and the fall
Of gracious dews in eyes long dry and dim;
And hope in lovers' pathways midst perfume
Of woodland haunts; and—meed exceeding all,—
The love of little children laurels him.

261 *Our Boyhood Haunts*

HO! I'm going back to where
We were youngsters.—Meet me there,
Dear old barefoot chum, and we
Will be as we used to be,—
Lawless rangers up and down
The old creek beyond the town—
Little sunburnt gods at play,
Just as in that far-away:—
Water nymphs, all unafraid,
Shall smile at us from the brink
Of the old mill-race and wade
Tow'rd us as we kneeling drink
At the spring our boyhood knew,
Pure and clear as morning-dew:

And, as we are rising there,
Doubly dow'r'd to hear and see,
We shall thus be made aware
Of an eerie piping, heard
High above the happy bird
In the hazel: And then we,
Just across the creek, shall see
(Hah! the goaty rascal!) Pan
Hoof it o'er the sloping green,
Mad with his own melody,
Ay, and (bless the beasty man!)
Stamping from the grassy soil
Bruisèd scents of *fleur-de-lis*,
Boneset, mint, and pennyroyal.

262 *To Robert Louis Stevenson*

ON HIS FIRST VISIT TO AMERICA

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON!
Blue the lift and braw the dawn
O' yer comin' here amang
Strangers wha hae luved ye lang!
Strangers tae ye we maun be,
Yet tae us ye're kenned a wee
By the writin's ye hae done,
Robert Louis Stevenson.

Syne ye've pit ye'r pen tae sic'
Tales it stabbt us tae the quick—
Whiles o' tropic isles an' seas
An' o' gowden treesuries—

Tales o' deid men's banes; an' tales
Swete as sangs o' nightingales
When the nune o' mirk's begun—
Robert Louis Stevenson.

Sae we hail thee! nane the less
For the "burr" that ye caress
Wi' yer denty tongue o' Scots,
Makin' words forget-me-nots
O' yer bonnie braes that were
Sung o' Burns the Poemer—
And that later lavrock, one
Robert Louis Stevenson.

263 *The Silent Singer*

MRS. D. M. JORDAN, APRIL 29, 1895

ALL sudden she hath ceased to sing
Hushed in eternal slumbering,
And we make moan that she is dead.—
Nay; peace! be comforted.

Between her singing and her tears
She pauses, listening—and she hears
The Song we cannot hear.—And thus
She mutely pities us.

Could she speak out, we doubt not she
Would turn to us full tenderly,
And in the old melodious voice
Say: "Weep not, but rejoice."

Ay, musical as waters run
In woodland rills through shade and sun,
The sweet voice would flow on and say,—
"Be glad with me to-day!—

"Your Earth was very dear and fair
To me—the groves and grasses there;
The bursting buds and blossoms—O
I always loved them so!—

"The very dews within them seemed
Reflected by mine eyes and gleamed
Adown my cheeks in what you knew
As 'tears,' and not as dew.

"Your birds, too, in the orchard-boughs—
I could not hear them from the house,
But I must leave my work and stray
Out in the open day

"And the illimitable range
Of their vast freedom—always strange
And new to me—It pierced my heart
With sweetness as a dart!—

"The singing! singing! singing!—All
The trees bloomed blossoms musical
That chirped and trilled in colors till
My whole soul seemed to fill

"To overflow with music, so
That I have found me kneeling low

Midst the lush grass, with murmurous words
Thanking the flowers and birds.

"So with the ones to me most dear—
I loved them, as I love them Here:
Bear with my memory, therefore,
As when in days of yore,

"O friends of mine, ye praised the note
Of some song, quavering from my throat
Out of the overstress of love
And all the pain thereof.

"And ye, too, do I love with this
Same love—and Heaven knows all it is,—
The birds' song in it—bud and bloom—
The turf, but not the tomb."

Between her singing and her tears
She pauses, listening—and she hears
The Song we cannot hear.—And thus
She mutely pities us.

264 *The Christ*

"FATHER!" (so The Word) He cried,—
"Son of Thine, and yet denied;
By my brothers dragged and tried,
Scoffed and scourged, and crucified,
With a thief on either side—
Brothers mine, alike belied,—
Arms of mercy open wide,
Father! Father!" So He died.

265 *The Home-Voyage*

GENERAL HENRY W. LAWTON—FELL AT SAN MATEO, DECEMBER 19, 1899. IN STATE, INDIANAPOLIS, FEBRUARY 6, 1900.

BEAR with us, O Great Captain, if our pride
Show equal measure with our grief's excess
In greeting you in this your helplessness
To countermand our vanity or hide
Your stern displeasure that we thus had tried
To praise you, knowing praise was your distress:
But this home-coming swells our hearts no less—
Because for love of home you proudly died.
Lo! then, the cable, fathoms 'neath the keel
That shapes your course, is eloquent of you;
The old flag, too, at half-mast overhead—
We doubt not that its gale-kissed ripples feel
A prouder sense of red and white and blue,—
The stars—Ah, God, were *they* interpreted!

In strange lands were your latest honors won—
In strange wilds, with strange dangers all beset;
With rain, like tears, the face of day was wet,
As rang the ambushed foeman's fateful gun:
And as you felt your final duty done,
We feel *that* glory thrills your spirit yet,—
When at the front, in swiftest death, you met
The patriot's doom and best reward in one.
And so the tumult of that island war,
At last, for you, is stilled forevermore—
Its scenes of blood blend white as ocean foam
On your rapt vision as you sight afar
The sails of peace, and from that alien shore
The proud ship bears you on your voyage home.

Or rough or smooth the wave, or lowering day
Or starlit sky—you hold, by native right,
Your high tranquillity—the silent might
Of the true hero—so you led the way
To victory through stormiest battle-fray,
Because your followers, high above the fight,
Heard your soul's lightest whisper bid them smite
For God and man and space to kneel and pray.
And thus you cross the seas unto your own
Beloved land, convoyed with honors meet,
Saluted as your home's first heritage—
Nor salutation from your State alone,
But *all* the States, gathered in mighty fleet,
Dip colors as you move to anchorage.

266 *The Bed*

I

"THOU, of all God's gifts the best,
Blessèd Bed!" I muse, and rest
Thinking how it havened me
In my dazèd Infancy—
Ere mine eyes could bear the kind
Daylight through the window-blind,
Or my lips, in yearning quest,
Groping found the mother-breast,
Or mine utterance but owned
Minor sounds that sobbed and moaned.

II

Gracious Bed that nestled me
Even ere the mother's knee,—

Lulling me to slumber ere
Conscious of my treasure there—
Save the tiny palms that kept
Fondling, even as I slept,
That rare dual-wealth of mine,—
Softest pillow—sweetest wine!—
Gentlest cheer for mortal guest,
And of Love's fare lordliest.

III

By thy grace, O Bed, the first
Blooms of Boyhood-memories burst:—
Dreams of riches, swift withdrawn
As I, wakening, find the dawn
With its glad Spring-face once more
Glimmering on me as of yore:
Then the bluebird's limpid cry
Lulls me like a lullaby,
Till falls every failing sense
Back to sleep's sheer impotence.

IV

Or, a truant, home again,—
With the moonlight through the pane,
And the kiss that ends the prayer—
Then the footsteps down the stair;
And the close hush; and far click
Of the old clock; and the thick
Sweetness of the locust-bloom
Drugging all the enchanted room

Into darkness fathoms deep
As mine own pure childish sleep.

V

Gift and spell, O Bed, retell
Every lovely miracle—
Up from childhood's simplest dream
Unto manhood's pride supreme!—
Sacredness no words express,—
Lo, the young wife's fond caress
Of her first-born, while beside
Bends the husband, tearful-eyed,
Marveling of kiss and prayer
Which of these is holier there.

VI

Trace the vigils through the long,
Long nights, when the cricket's song
Stunned the sick man's fevered brain,
As he tossed and moaned in pain
Piteous—till thou, O Bed,
Smoothed the pillows for his head,
And thy soothest solace laid
Round him, and his fever weighed
Into slumber deep and cool,
And divinely merciful.

VII

Thus, O Bed, all gratefully
I would ever sing of thee—

Till the final sleep shall fall
O'er me, and the crickets call
In the grasses where at last
I am indolently cast
Like a play-worn boy at will.—
'Tis a Bed befriends me still—
Yea, and Bed, belike, the best,
Softest, safest, blessèdest.

267 *Whittier—At Newburyport*

SEPTEMBER 7, 1892

HAIL to thee, with all good cheer!
Though men say thou liest here
Dead,
And mourn, all uncomforted.

By thy faith refining mine,
Life still lights those eyes of thine,
Clear
As the Autumn atmosphere.

Ever still thy smile appears
As the rainbow of thy tears
Bent
O'er thy love's vast firmament.

Thou endurest—shalt endure,
Purely, as thy song is pure.
Hear
Thus my hail: Good cheer! Good cheer!

268 *The Unheard*

I

ONE in the musical throng
Stood forth with his violin;
And warm was his welcome, and long
The later applause and the din.—
He had uttered, with masterful skill,
A melody hailed of men;
And his own blood leapt a-thrill,
As they thundered again.

II

Another stood forth.—And a rose
Bloomed in her hair—likewise
One at her tremulous throat—
And a *rapture* bloomed in her eyes.
Tempests of cheers upon cheers,
Praises to last a life long;
Roses in showers of tears—
All for her song.

III

One sat apart and alone,
Her lips clasped close and straight,
Uttering never a tone
That the World might hear, elate—
Uttering never a low
Murmurous verse nor a part
Of the veriest song—But O
The song in her heart!

269

In the Evening

I

IN the evening of our days,
When the first far stars above
Glimmer dimmer, through the haze,
Than the dewy eyes of love,
Shall we mournfully revert
To the vanished morns and Mays
Of our youth, with hearts that hurt,—
In the evening of our days?

II

Shall the hand that holds your own
Till the twain are thrilled as now,—
Be withheld, or colder grown?
Shall my kiss upon your brow
Falter from its high estate?
And, in all forgetful ways,
Shall we sit apart and wait—
In the evening of our days?

III

Nay, my wife—my life!—the gloom
Shall enfold us velvetwise,
And my smile shall be the groom
Of the gladness of your eyes:
Gently, gently as the dew
Mingles with the darkening maze,
I shall fall asleep with you—
In the evening of our days.

270

At Sea

YEA, we go down to sea in ships—
But Hope remains behind,
And Love, with laughter on his lips,
And Peace, of passive mind;
While out across the deeps of night,
With lifted sails of prayer,
We voyage off in quest of light,
Nor find it anywhere.

O Thou who wroughtest earth and sea,
Yet keepest from our eyes
The shores of an eternity
In calms of Paradise,
Blow back upon our foolish quest
With all the driving rain
Of blinding tears and wild unrest,
And waft us home again!

271 *Her Beautiful Hands*

O YOUR hands—they are strangely fair!
Fair—for the jewels that sparkle there,—
Fair—for the witchery of the spell
That ivory keys alone can tell;
But when their delicate touches rest
Here in my own do I love them best,
As I clasp with eager, acquisitive spans
My glorious treasure of beautiful hands!

Marvelous—wonderful—beautiful hands!
They can coax roses to bloom in the strands
Of your brown tresses; and ribbons will twine,
Under mysterious touches of thine,
Into such knots as entangle the soul
And fetter the heart under such a control
As only the strength of my love understands—
My passionate love for your beautiful hands.

As I remember the first fair touch
Of those beautiful hands that I love so much,
I seem to thrill as I then was thrilled,
Kissing the glove that I found unfilled—
When I met your gaze, and the queenly bow,
As you said to me, laughingly, "Keep it now!" . . .
And dazed and alone in a dream I stand,
Kissing this ghost of your beautiful hand.

When first I loved, in the long ago,
And held your hand as I told you so—
Pressed and caressed it and gave it a kiss
And said "I could die for a hand like this!"
Little I dreamed love's fullness yet
Had to ripen when eyes were wet
And prayers were vain in their wild demands
For one warm touch of your beautiful hands.

. . . . . .

Beautiful Hands!—O Beautiful Hands!
Could you reach out of the alien lands
Where you are lingering, and give me, to-night,
Only a touch—were it ever so light—
My heart were soothed, and my weary brain
Would lull itself into rest again;
For there is no solace the world commands
Like the caress of your beautiful hands.

272

A Tinkle of Bells

THE light of the moon on the white of the snow,
And the answering twinkles along the street,
And our sleigh flashing by, in the glamour and glow
Of the glorious nights of the long ago,
When the laugh of her lips rang clear and sweet
As the tinkle our horses shook out of the bells
And flung and tossed back
On our glittering track
In a shower of tremulous, murmuring swells
Of the echoing, airy, melodious bells!—

O the mirth of the bells!
And the worth of the bells!
Come tinkle again, in this dearth of the bells,
This laughter and love that I lack, yearning back
For the far-away sound of the bells!

Ah! the bells, they were glad in the long ago!
And the tinkles they had, they have thrilled me so
I have said: "It is they and her songs and face
Make summer for me of the wintriest place!"
And now—but sobbings and sad farewells,
As I peer in the night through the sleeted pane,
Hearing a clangor and wrangle of bells,
And never a tinkle again!

The snow is a-swoon, and the moon dead-white,
And the frost is wild in the air to-night!
Yet still will I linger and listen and pray
Till the sound of her voice shall come this way,
With a tinkle of bells,
And the lisp-like tread
Of the hooves of the sleigh,
And the murmurs and swells
Of the vows she said.
And O, I shall listen as madmen may,
Till the tinkling bells ring down this way!—
Till again the grasp of my hand entwines
The tensioned loops of the quivering lines,
And again we ride in the wake of the pride
And the strength of the coursers, side by side;

With our faces smitten again by the spray
Of the froth of our steeds as we gallop away
In affright of the bells,
And the might of the bells,
And the infinite glee and delight of the bells,
As they tinkle and tinkle and tinkle, till they
Are heard through a dawn where the mists are drawn
And we canter a gallop and dash away
Sheer into The Judgment Day!

273 *The Old Man of the Sea*

I'M The Old Man of the Sea—I am!—
And this is my secret pride,
That I have a hundred shapes, all sham,
And a hundred names beside:
They have named me "Habit," and "Way," forsooth
"Capricious," and "Fancy-free";—
But to you, O Youth, I confess the truth,—
I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

I'm The Old Man of the Sea, yo-ho!
So lift up a song with me,
As I sit on the throne of your shoulders, alone,
I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

Crowned with the crown of your noblest thought,
I'm The Old Man of the Sea:
I reign, rule, ruin, and palter not
In my pitiless tyranny:

You, my lad, are my gay Sindbad,
  Frisking about, with me
High on the perch I have always had—
  I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

I'm The Old Man of the Sea, yo-ho!
  So lift up a song with me,
As I sit on the throne of your shoulders, alone,
  I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

Tricked in the guise of your best intent,
  I am your failures—all—
I am the victories you invent,
  And your high resolves that fall:
I am the vow you are breaking now
  As the wassail-bowl swings free
And the red guilt flushes your cheek and brow—
  I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

I'm The Old Man of the Sea, yo-ho!
  So lift up a song with me,
As I sit on the throne of your shoulders, alone,
  I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

I am your false dreams of success
  And your mythical future fame—
Your life-long lies, and your soul's distress
  And your slowly-dying shame:
I'm the chattering half of your latest laugh,
  And your tongue's last perfidy—
Your doom, your tomb, and your epitaph . . .
  I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

I'm The Old Man of the Sea, yo-ho!
So lift up a song with me,
As I sit on the throne of your shoulders, alone,
I'm The Old Man of the Sea.

274 *Toil*

HE had toiled away for a weary while,
Thro' day's dull glare and night's deep gloom;
And many a long and lonesome mile
He had paced in the round of his dismal room;
He had fared on hunger—had drunk of pain
As the drouthy earth might drink of rain;
And the brow he leaned in his trembling palm
Throbbed with a misery so intense
That never again did it seem that calm
Might come to him with the gracious balm
Of old-time languor and indolence.
And he said, "I will leave the tale half told,
And leave the song for the winds to sing;
And the pen—that pitiless blade of gold
That stabs my heart like a dagger-sting—
I will drive to the hilt through the inkstand's top
And spill its blood to the last black drop!"
Then he masked his voice with a laugh, and went
Out in the world with a lawless grace—
With a brazen lie in his eyes and face
Told in a smile of glad content:
He roved the round of pleasures through,
And tasted each as it pleased him to;

He joined old songs, and the clink and din
Of the revelers at the banquet hall;
And he tripped his feet where the violin
Spun its waltz for the carnival;
He looked, bedazed, on the luring wile
And the siren-light of a woman's smile,
And peered in her eyes as a diver might
Peer in the sea ere he leaps outright,—
Caught his breath, with a glance above,
And dropped full-length in the depths of love.

. . . . . .

'Tis well if ever the false lights die
On the alien coasts where our wreck'd hopes lie!
'Tis well to feel, through the blinding rain,
Our outflung hands touch earth again!
So the castaway came, safe from doom,
Back at last to his lonely room,
Filled with its treasure of work to do
And radiant with the light and bloom
Of the summer sun and his glad soul, too!
And sweet as ever the song of birds,
Over his work he sang these words:—

"O friends are good, with their princely ways,
And royal hearts they are goodly things;
And fellowship, in the long dark days
When the drear soul cowers with drooping wings,
Is a thing to yearn for.—*Mirth* is good,—
For a ringing laugh is a rhythmic cry
Blown like a hail from the Angelhood
To the barque of the lone soul drifting by.—

Goodly, too, is the mute caress
Of woman's hands and their tenderness—
The warm breath wet with the dews of love—
The vine-like arms, and the fruit thereof—
The touch that thrills, and the kiss that melts,—
But Toil is sweeter than all things else."

275 *The Mute Singer*

THE morning sun seemed fair as though
It were a great red rose ablow
In lavish bloom,
With all the air for its perfume,—
Yet he who had been wont to sing,
Could trill no thing.

Supine, at noon, as he looked up
Into the vast inverted cup
Of heavenly gold,
Brimmed with its marvels manifold,
And his eye kindled, and his cheek—
Song could not speak.

Night fell forebodingly; he knew
Soon must the rain be falling, too,—
And, home, heartsore,
A missive met him at the door—
—Then Song lit on his lips, and he
Sang gloriously.

276 *Old School-Day Romances*

OF the wealth of facts and fancies
That our memories may recall,
The old school-day romances
Are the dearest, after all!—
When some sweet thought revises
The half-forgotten tune
That opened "Exercises"
On "Friday Afternoon."

We seem to hear the clicking
Of the pencil and the pen,
And the solemn ceaseless ticking
Of the time-piece ticking then;
And we note the watchful master,
As he waves the warning rod,
With our own heart beating faster
Than the boy's who threw the wad.

Some little hand uplifted,
And the creaking of a shoe:—
A problem left unsifted
For the teacher's hand to do.
The murmured hum of learning,
And the flutter of a book—
The smell of something burning,
And the school's inquiring look.

The bashful boy in blushes;
And the girl, with glancing eyes,
Who hides her smiles, and hushes
The laugh about to rise,—

Then, with a quick invention,
  Assumes a serious face,
To meet the words, "Attention!
  Every scholar in his place!"

The opening song, page twenty—
  Ah! dear old "Golden Wreath,"
You willed your sweets in plenty;
  And some who look beneath
The leaves of Time will linger,
  And loving tears will start,
As Fancy trails her finger
  O'er the index of the heart.

"Good news from Home"—We hear it
  Welling tremulous, yet clear
And holy as the spirit
  Of the song we used to hear—
"Good news for me"—(A throbbing
  And an aching melody)—
"Has come across the"—(sobbing,
  Yea, and salty) "dark blue sea!"

Or the pæan "Scotland's burning!"
  With its mighty surge and swell
Of chorus, still returning
  To its universal yell—
Till we're almost glad to drop to
  Something sad and full of pain—
And "Skip verse three," and stop, too,
  Ere our hearts are broke again.

Then "the big girls'" compositions,
With their doubt, and hope, and glow
Of heart and face,—conditions
Of "the big boys"—even so,
When themes of "Spring" and "Summer,"
And of "Fall" and "Wintertime"
Droop our heads and hold us dumber
Than the sleighbell's fancied chime.

Elocutionary Science—
Still in changeless infancy!—
With its "Cataline's Defiance",
And "The Banner of the Free":
Or—lured from Grandma's attic,
A ramshackle rocker there
Adds a skreek of the dramatic
To the poet's "Old Arm-Chair."

Or the "Speech of Logan" shifts us
From the pathos to the fire;
And Tell (with Gessler) lifts us
Many noble notches higher—
Till a youngster, far from sunny,
With sad eyes of watery blue,
Winds up with something "funny,"
Like "Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

Then a Dialogue—selected
For its realistic worth:—
The Cruel Boy detected
With a turtle turned to earth

Back-downward; and, in pleading,
The Good Boy—strangely gay
At such a sad proceeding—
Says, "Turn him over, pray!"

So the exercises taper,
Through gradations of delight,
To the reading of "The Paper"
Which is entertaining—quite!—
For it goes ahead and mentions
"If a certain Mr. O.
Has serious intentions
That he ought to tell her so."

It also "Asks permission
To intimate to 'John'
The dubious condition
Of the ground he's standing on;"
And, dropping the suggestion
To "mind what he's about,"
It stuns him with the question
"Does his mother know he's out?"

And among the contributions
To this "Academic Press"
Are "Versified Effusions"
By—"Our Lady Editress"—
Which fact is proudly stated
By the Chief of the concern,—
Though the verse communicated
Bears the pen-name "Fanny Fern."

When all has been recited,
And the teacher's bell is heard,
And visitors, invited,
Have dropped a kindly word,
A hush of holy feeling
Falls down upon us there,
As though the day were kneeling,
With the twilight for the prayer.

Midst the wealth of fact and fancies
That our memories may recall,
Thus the old school-day romances
Are the dearest, after all!—
When some sweet thought revises
The half-forgotten tune
That opened "Exercises"
On "Friday Afternoon."

277 *He Cometh in Sweet Sense*

HE cometh in sweet sense to thee,
Be it or dawn, or noon, or night,—
No deepest pain, nor halest glee,
But He discerneth it aright.

If there be tears bedim thine eyes,
His sympathy thou findest plain,—
The darkest midnight of the skies
He weepeth with the tears of rain;

If thou art joyful, He hath had
  His gracious will, and lo, 'tis well,—
As thou art glad, so He is glad,
  Nor mercy strained one syllable.

Wild vows are words, as prayers are words.—
  God's mercy is not measured by
Our poor deservings: He affords
  To listen, if we laugh or cry.

278 *In State*

IS it the martins or katydids?
  Early morning or late at night?
A dream, belike, kneeling down on the lids
  Of a dying man's eyesight.

. . . . . .

Over and over I heard the rain—
  Over and over I waked to see
The blaze of the lamp as again and again
  Its stare insulted me.

. . . . . .

It is not the click of the clock I hear—
  It is the *pulse* of the clock,—and lo!
How it throbs and throbs on the quickened ear
  Of the dead man listening so!

I heard them whisper "*She* would not come;"
But, being dead, I knew—I knew! . . .
Some hearts they love us alive, and some
They love us dead—they do!

And *I* am dead—and I joy to be,—
For here are my folded hands, so cold,
And yet blood-warm with the roses she
Has given me to hold.

Dead—yea, dead!—But I hear the beat
Of her heart, as her warm lips touch my brow—
And O how sweet—how *blinding* sweet
To know that she loves me *now!*

279 *A Noon Interval*

A DEEP, delicious hush in earth and sky—
A gracious lull—since, from its wakening,
The morn has been a feverish, restless thing
In which the pulse of Summer ran too high
And riotous, as though its heart went nigh
To bursting with delights past uttering:
Now, as an o'erjoyed child may cease to sing
All falteringly at play, with drowsy eye
Draining the pictures of a fairy-tale
To brim his dreams with—there comes o'er the day
A loathful silence, wherein all sounds fail
Like loitering tones of some faint roundelay . . .
No wakeful effort longer may avail—
The wand waves, and the dozer sinks away.

280 *His Room*

I'M home again, my dear old Room,
I'm home again, and happy, too,
As, peering through the brightening gloom,
I find myself alone with you:
Though brief my stay, nor far away,
I missed you—missed you night and day—
As wildly yearned for you as now.—
Old Room, how are you, anyhow?

My easy chair, with open arms,
Awaits me just within the door;
The littered carpet's woven charms
Have never seemed so bright before,—
The old rosettes and mignonettes
And ivy-leaves and violets,
Look up as pure and fresh of hue
As though baptized in morning-dew.

Old Room, to me your homely walls
Fold round me like the arms of love,
And over all my being falls
A blessing pure as from above—
Even as a nestling child caressed
And lulled upon a loving breast,
With folded eyes, too glad to weep
And yet too sad for dreams or sleep.

You've been so kind to me, old Room—
So patient in your tender care,
My drooping heart in fullest bloom
Has blossomed for you unaware;

And who but you had cared to woo
A heart so dark, and heavy too,
As in the past you lifted mine
From out the shadow to the shine?

For I was but a wayward boy
When first you gladly welcomed me
And taught me work was truer joy
Than rioting incessantly:
And thus the din that stormed within
The old guitar and violin
Has fallen in a fainter tone
And sweeter, for your sake alone.

Though in my absence I have stood
In festal halls a favored guest,
I missed, in this old quietude,
My worthy work and worthy rest—
By *this* I know that long ago
You loved me first, and told me so
In art's mute eloquence of speech
The voice of praise may never reach.

For lips and eyes in truth's disguise
Confuse the faces of my friends,
Till old affection's fondest ties
I find unraveling at the ends;
But, as I turn to you, and learn
To meet my griefs with less concern,
Your love seems all I have to keep
Me smiling lest I needs must weep.

Yet I am happy, and would fain
  Forget the world and all its woes;
So set me to my tasks again,
  Old Room, and lull me to repose:
    And as we glide adown the tide
    Of dreams, forever side by side,
    I'll hold your hands as lovers do
    Their sweethearts' and talk love to you.

281 *A Lost Love*

'TWAS a summer ago when he left me here—
  A summer of smiles, with never a tear
Till I said to him, with a sob, my dear,—
    Good-by, my lover; good-by!

For I loved him, O as the stars love night!
And my cheeks for him flashed red and white
When first he called me his Heart's delight.—
    Good-by, my lover; good-by!

The touch of his hand was a thing divine
As he sat with me in the soft moonshine
And drank of my love as men drink wine,—
    Good-by, my lover; good-by!

And never a night as I knelt in prayer,
In thought as white as our own souls were,
But in fancy he came and he kissed me there,—
    Good-by, my lover; good-by!

But now—ah, *now!* what an empty place
My whole heart is!—Of the old embrace
And the kiss I loved there lives no trace—
Good-by, my lover; good-by!

He sailed not over the stormy sea,
And he went not down in the waves—not he—
But O, he is lost—for he married me—
Good-by, my lover; good-by!

282 *The Paths of Peace*

MAURICE THOMPSON—FEBRUARY 14, 1901

HE would have holiday—outworn, in sooth,
Would turn again to seek the old release,—
The open fields—the loved haunts of his youth—
The woods, the waters, and the paths of peace.

The rest—the recreation he would choose
Be his abidingly! Long has he served
And greatly—ay, and greatly let us use
Our grief, and yield him nobly as deserved.

Perchance—with subtler senses than our own
And love exceeding ours—he listens thus
To ever nearer, clearer pipings blown
From out the lost lands of Theocritus.

Or, haply, he is beckoned from us here
By knight or yeoman of the bosky wood,

Or, chained in roses, haled a prisoner
Before the blithe Immortal, Robin Hood.

Or, mayhap, Chaucer signals, and with him
And his rare fellows he goes pilgriming;
Or Walton signs him, o'er the morning brim
Of misty waters midst the dales of Spring.

Ho! wheresoe'er he goes, or whosoe'er
He fares with, he has bravely earned the boon.
Be his the open, and the glory there
Of April-buds, May-blooms and flowers of June!

Be his the glittering dawn, the twinkling dew,
The breathless pool or gush of laughing streams —
Be his the triumph of the coming true
Of all his loveliest dreams!

283 *Kathleen Mavourneen*

1894

Frederick Nicholls Crouch, the musical genius and composer of the well-known air, "Kathleen Mavourneen," was, at above date, living, in helpless age, in his adopted country, America—a citizen since 1849.

KATHLEEN Mavourneen! The song is still ringing
As fresh and as clear as the trill of the birds;
In world-weary hearts it is throbbing and singing
In pathos too sweet for the tenderest words.
Oh, have we forgotten the one who first breathed it?

Oh, have we forgotten his rapturous art—
Our meed to the master whose genius bequeathed it?
Oh, why art thou silent, thou Voice of the Heart?—
Our meed to the master whose genius bequeathed it
Oh, why are we silent, Kathleen Mavourneen!

Kathleen Mavourneen! Thy lover still lingers;
The long night is waning, the stars pale and few;
Thy sad serenader, with tremulous fingers,
Is bowed with his tears as the lily with dew;
The old harpstrings quaver, the old voice is shaking
In sighs and in sobs moans the yearning refrain;
The old vision dims, and the old heart is breaking . . .
Kathleen Mavourneen, inspire us again!
The old vision dims, and the old heart is breaking:
Oh, why are we silent, Kathleen Mavourneen!

284 *An Order for a Song*

MAKE me a song of all good things,
And fill it full of murmurings,
Of merry voices, such as we
Remember in our infancy;
But make it tender, for the sake
Of hearts that brood and tears that break,
And tune it with the harmony,
The sighs of sorrow make.

Make me a song of summer-time,
And pour such music down the rhyme

As ripples over gleaming sands
And grassy brinks of meadow-lands;
But make it very sweet and low,
For need of them that sorrow so,
Because they reap with empty hands
The dreams of long ago.

Make me a song of such a tone,
That when we croon it all alone,
The tears of longing as they drip,
Will break in laughter on the lip;
And make it, oh, so pure and clear
And jubilant that every ear
Shall drink its rapture sip by sip
And Heaven lean to hear.

285 *Child's Christmas Carol*

CHRIST used to be like you and me,
When just a lad in Galilee,—
So when we pray, on Christmas Day,
He favors first the prayers we say:
Then waste no tear, but pray with cheer,
This gladdest day of all the year:

O Brother mine of birth Divine,
Upon this natal day of Thine
Bear with our stress of happiness
Nor count our reverence the less
Because with glee and jubilee
Our hearts go singing up to Thee.

286 *Old Hec's Idolatry*

HEIGH-O! our jolly tilts at New World song!—
What was the poem indeed! and where the bard—
"Stabbing his inkpot ever, not his heart,"
As Hector phrased it contumeliously,
Mouthing and munching, at the orchard-stile,
A water-cored rambo whose spirited juice
Glanced, sprayed and flecked the sunlight as he mouth'd
And muncht, and muncht and mouth'd. All loved the man!
"Our Hector" as his *Alma Mater* oozed
It into utterance—"Old Hec" said we
Who knew him, hide-and-tallow, hoof-and-horn!
So he: "O ay! my soul! our New World song—
The tweedle-deedles of our modern school—
A school of minnows,—not one gamy bass—
To hook the angler, not the angler him.
Here! all ye little fishes: tweedle-dee!
Soh! one—along the vasty stream of time—
Glints to the surface with a gasp,—and, lo,
A bubble! and he thinks, 'My eye!—see there,
Ye little fishes,—there's a song I've sung!'
Another gapes: another bubble; then
He thinks: 'Well, is it not a wondrous art
To breathe a great immortal poem like that!'
And then another—and another still—
And yet another,—till from brim to brim
The tide is pustuled over with a pest
Of bubbles—bursting bubbles! Ay! O ay!"
So, bluff old Hec. And we, who knew his mood
Had ramped its worst—unless we roused it yet
To ire's horiffickest insanity

By some inane, unguarded reference
To "verse beragged in Hoosier dialect"—
(A strangely unforgotten coinage of
Old Hec's, long years agone)—we, so, forbore
A word, each glimpsing each, as down we sank,
Couched limply in the orchard's selvage, where—
The rambo finished and the soggy core
Zippt at a sapphire wasp with waist more slim
Than any slender lady's, of old wars,
Pent fasting for long sennights in tall towers
That overtop the undercringing seas—
With one accordant voice, the while he creased
His scroll of manuscript, we said, "Go on."
Then Hector thus:

AN IDYL OF THE KING

Erewhile, as Autumn, to King Arthur's court
Came Raelus, clamoring: "Lo, has our house
Been sacked and pillaged by a lawless band
Of robber knaves, led on by Alstanés,
The Night-Flower named, because of her fair face.
All like a lily gleaming in the dusk
Of her dark hair—and like a lily brimmed
With dewy eyes that drip their limpid smiles
Like poison out, for by them has been wro't
My elder brother's doom, as much I fear.
While three days gone was holden harvest-feast
At Lynion Castle—clinging like a gull
High up the gray cliffs of Caerleon—
Came, leaf-like lifted from the plain below
As by a twisted wind, a rustling pack

Of bandit pillagers, with Alstanés
Bright-fluttering like a red leaf in the front.
And ere we were aware of fell intent—
Not knowing whether it was friend or foe—
We found us in their toils, and all the house
In place of guests held only prisoners—
Save that the host, my brother, wro't upon
By the strange beauty of the robber queen,
Was left unfettered, but by silken threads
Of fine-spun flatteries and wanton smiles
Of the enchantress, till her villain thieves
Had rifled as they willed and signal given
To get to horse again. And so they went—
Their leader flinging backward, as she rode,
A kiss to my mad brother—mad since then,—
For from that sorry hour he but talked
Of Alstanés, and her rare beauty, and
Her purity—ay, even that he said
Was star-white, and should light his life with love
Or leave him groping blindly in its quest
Thro' all eternity. So, sighing, he
Went wandering about till set of sun,
Then got to horse, and bade us all farewell;
And with his glamoured eyes bent trancedly
Upon the tumbled sands that marked the way
The robber-woman went, he turned and chased
His long black shadow o'er the edge of night."

—So Raelus, all seemingly befret
With such concern as nipped his utterance
In scraps of speech: at which Sir Lancelot,

Lifting a slow smile to the King, and then
Turning his cool eye on the youth—"And you
Would track this siren-robber to her hold
And rout her rascal followers, and free
Your brother from the meshes of this queen
Of hearts—for there you doubtless think him?"
"Ay!"
Foamed Raclus, cheek flushed and eye aflame,—
"So even have I tracked, and found them, too,
And know their burrow, shrouded in a copse,
Where, faring in my brother's quest, I heard
The nicker of his horse, and followed on,
And found him tethered in a thicket wild,
As tangled in its tress of leaf and limb
As is a madman's hair; and down the path
That parted it and ran across a knoll
And dipped again, all suddenly I came
Upon a cave, wide-yawning 'neath a beard
Of tangled moss and vine, whence issuing
I heard, blown o'er my senses faint and clear
As whiffs of summer wind, my brother's voice
Lilting a love-song, with the burden tricked
With dainty warblings of a woman's tongue:
And even as I listening bent, I heard
Such peals of wanton merriment as made
My own heart flutter as a bird that beats
For freedom at the bars that prison it.
So turned I then and fled as one who flies
To save himself alone—forgetful all
Of that my dearer self—my brother.—O!"—
Breaking as sharply as the icy blade

That loosens from the eave to slice the air
And splinter into scales of flying frost—
"Thy help! Thy help! A dozen goodly knights—
Ay, even that, if so it be their hearts
Are hungry as my own to right the wrong!"

So Raelus. And Arthur graciously
Gave ear to him, and, patient, heard him thro',
And pitied him, and granted all he asked;
Then took his hand and held it, saying, "Strong
And ever stronger may its grasp be knit
About the sword that flashes in the cause
Of good."

Thus Raelus, on the morrow's front,
Trapped like a knight and shining like a star,
Pranced from the archway of the court, and led
His glittering lances down the gleaming road
That river-like ran winding till it slipped
Out of the palace view and spilled their shields
Like twinkling bubbles o'er the mountain brim.

Then happed it that as Raelus rode, his tongue
Kept even pace and cantered ever on
Right merrily. His brother, as he said,
Had such an idle soul within his breast—
Such shallowness of fancy for his heart
To drift about in—that he well believed
Its anchor would lay hold on any smile
The lees of womanhood might offer him.
As for himself, he loved his brother well,
Yet had far liefer see him stark and white
In marble death than that his veins should burn

With such vitality as spent its flame
So garishly it knew no steady blaze,
But ever wavered round as veered the wind
Of his conceit; for he had made his boast—
Tho' to his own shame did he speak of it—
That with a wink he could buy every smile
That virtue owned. So tattled Raelus
Till, heated with his theme, he lifted voice
And sang the song, "The Light of Woman's Eyes!"

"O bright is gleaming morn on mountain height;
And bright the moon, slipt from its sheath of night,—
But brighter is the light of woman's eyes.

"And bright the dewdrop, trembling on the lip
Of some red rose, or lily petal-tip,
Or lash of pink,—but brighter woman's eyes.

"Bright is the firefly's ever-drifting spark
That throbs its pulse of light out in the dark;
And bright the stars,—but brighter woman's eyes.

"Bright morn or even; bright or moon or star,
And all the many twinkling lights that are,—
O brighter than ye all are woman's eyes."

So Raelus sang.—And they who rode with him
Bewildered were, and even as he sang
Went straggling, twos and threes, and fell behind
To whisper wonderingly, "Is he a fool?"
And "Does he waver in his mind?" and "Does

The newness of adventure dazzle him?"
So spake they each to each, till far beyond,
With but one loathful knight in company,
They saw him quit the beaten track, and turn
Into the grassy margin of a wood.
And loitering, they fell in mocking jest
Of their strange leader! "See! why, see!" said one,—
"He needs no help to fight his hornets' nest,
But one brave knight to squire him!"—pointing on
To where fared on the two and disappeared.
"O ay!" said one, "belike he is some old
War-battered knight of long-forgotten age,
That, bursting from his chrysalis, the grave,
Comes back to show us tricks we never dreamed!"
"Or haply," said another, with a laugh,—
"He rides ahead to tell them that he comes
And shrive them ere his courage catches up."
And merry made they all, and each in turn
Filliped a witty pellet at his head:
Until, at last, their shadows shrunk away
And shortened 'neath them and the hour was noon.
They flung them from their horses listlessly
Within the grassy margin of the wood
Where had passed Raelus an hour agone:
And, hungered, spied a rustic; and they sent
To have them such refreshment as might be
Found at the nearest farm,—where, as it chanced,
Was had most wholesome meat, and milk, and bread;
And honey, too, celled in its fretted vase
Of gummy gold and dripping nectar-sweet
As dreamed-of kisses from the lips of love;

Wine, too, was broughten, rosy as the dawn
That ushers in the morning of the heart;
And tawny, mellow pear, whose golden ore
Fell molten on the tongue and oozed away
In creamy and delicious nothingness;
And netted melon, musky as the breath
Of breezes blown from out the Orient;
And purple clusterings of plum and grape,
Blurred with a dust dissolving at the touch
Like flakes the fairies had snowed over them.
And as the idlers basked, with toast and song
And graceful dalliance and wanton jest,
A sound of trampling hooves and jingling reins
Brake sudden, stilled them; and from out a dim
Path leading from the bosky wood there came
A troop of mounted damsels, nigh a score,
Led by a queenly girl, in crimson clad,
With lissome figure lithe and willowy,
And face as fair and sweet and pure withal
As might a maiden lily-blossom be
Ere it has learned the sin of perfect bloom:
Her hair, blown backward like a silken scarf
And fondled by the sun, was glossier
And bluer black than any raven's wing.
"And O!" she laughed, not knowing she was heard
By any but her fellows: "Men are fools!"
Then drawing rein, and wheeling suddenly,
Her charger mincing backward,—"Raelus—
My Raelus is greater than ye all,
Since he is such a fool that he forgets
He is a man, and lets his tongue of love

Run babbling like a silly child's; and, pah!
I puff him to the winds like thistle-down!"
And, wheeling as she spake, found staring up,
Wide-eyed and wondering, a group of knights,
Half lifted, as their elbows propped their heads,
Half lying; and one, smirker than the rest,
Stood bowing very low, with upturned eyes
Lit with a twinkling smile: "Fair lady—and
Most gracious gentlewomen"—seeing that
The others drew them back as tho' abashed
And veiled their faces with all modesty,
Tho' she, their leader, showed not any qualm,—
"Since all unwittingly we overheard
Your latest speech, and since we know at last
'All men are fools,' right glad indeed am I
That such a nest of us remains for you
To vanquish with those eyes." Then, serious,
That she nor smiled nor winced, nor anything—
"Your pardon will be to me as a shower
Of gracious rain unto a panting drouth."
So bowed in humblest reverence; at which
The damsel, turning to her followers,
Laughed musically,—"See! he proves my words!"
Whereat the others joined with inward glee
Her pealing mirth; and in the merriment
The knights chimed, too, and he, the vanquished one,
Till all the wood rang as at hunting-tide
When bugle-rumors float about the air
And echoes leap and revel in delight.
Then spake the vanquished knight, with mental eye
Sweeping the vantage-ground that chance had gained,—

"Your further pardon, lady: Since the name
Of Raelus fell from those lips of thine,
We fain would know of him. He led us here,
And as he went the way wherefrom your path
Emerges, haply you may tell us where
He may be found?"

"What! Raelus?" she cried,—
"He comes with you?—The brave Sir Raelus?—
That mighty champion?—that gallant knight?—
That peerless wonder of all nobleness?
Then proud am I to greet ye, knowing that;
And, certes, had I known of it ere now,
Then had I proffered you more courtesy
And told you, ere the asking, that he bides
The coming of his friends a league from this,
Hard by a reedy mere, where in high tune
We left him singing, nigh an hour agone."
Then, as she lightly wheeled her horse about
And signal gave to her companions
To follow, gaily cried: "Tell Raelus
His cousin sends to him her sad farewells
And fond regrets, and kisses many as
His valorous deeds are numbered in her heart."
And with "Fair morrow to ye, gentle knights!"
Her steed's hooves struck the highway at a bound;
And dimly thro' the dust they saw her lead
Her fluttering cavalcade as recklessly
As might a queen of Araby, fleet-horsed,
Skim o'er the level sands of Syria.
So vanished. And the knights with one accord
Put foot in stirrup, and, with puzzled minds

And many-channeled marvelings, filed in
The woody path, and fared them on and on
Thro' denser glooms, and ways more intricate;
Till, mystified at last and wholly lost,
They made full halt, and would have turned them back
But that a sudden voice brake on their ears
All piteous and wailing, as distressed:
And, following these cries, they sharply came
Upon an open road that circled round
A reedy flat and sodden tract of sedge,
Moated with stagnant water, crusted thick
With slimy moss, wherein were wriggling things
Entangled, and blind bubbles bulging up
And bursting where from middle way upshot
A tree-trunk, with its gnarled and warty hands
As tho' upheld to clutch at sliding snakes
Or nip the wet wings of the dragon-fly.
Here gazing, lo! they saw their comrade, he
That had gone on with Raelus; and he
Was tugging to fling back into its place
A heavy log that once had spanned the pool
And made a footway to the sedgy flat
Whence came the bitter wailing cries they heard.
Then hastened they to join him in his task;
But, panting, as they asked of Raelus,
All winded with his work, yet jollier
Than meadow-lark at morn, he sent his voice
In such a twittering of merriment,
The wail of sorrow died and laughter strewed
Its grave with melody.

"O Raelus!
Rare Raelus!" he cried and clapped his hands,
And even in the weeds that edged the pool
Fell wrestling with his mirth.—"Why, Raelus,"
He said, when he at last could speak again,
"Drew magnet-like—you know that talk of his,—
And so, adhesive, did I cling and cling
Until I found us in your far advance,
And, hidden in the wood, I stayed to say
'Twas better we should bide your coming. 'No.'
Then on again; and still a second time,—
'Shall we not bide their coming?' 'No!' he said;
And on again, until the third; and 'No—
We'll push a little further.' As we did;
And, sudden, came upon an open glade—
There to the northward,—by a thicket bound:
Then he dismounted, giving me his rein,
And, charging me to keep myself concealed,
And if he were not back a certain time
To ride for you and search where he had gone,
He crossed the opening and passed from sight
Within the thicket. I was curious:
And so, dismounting, tethered our two steeds
And followed him; and, creeping warily,
Came on him where—unseen of him—I saw
Him pause before the cave himself described
Before us yesternoon. And here he put
His fingers to his lips and gave a call
Bird-like and quavering: at which a face,
As radiant as summer sun at morn,
Parted the viny curtains of the cave;
And then, a moment later, came in view

A woman even fairer than my sight
Might understand. 'What! dare you come again?'
As, lifting up her eyes all flashingly,
She scorched him with a look of hate.—'Begone!
Or have you—traitor, villain, knave, and cur,—
Bro't minions of the law to carry out
The vengeance of your whimpering jealousy?'
Then Raelus, all cowering before
Her queenly anger, faltered: 'Hear me yet;
I do not threaten. But your love—your love!—
O give me that. I know you pure as dew:
Your love! Your love!—The smile that has gone out
And left my soul a midnight of despair!—
Your love or life! For I have even now
Your stronghold girt about with certain doom
If you but waver in your choice.—Your love!'
At which, as quick as tho't, leapt on him there
A strong man from the covert of the gloom;
And others, like to him, from here and there
Came scurrying. I, turning, would have fled,
But found myself as suddenly beset
And tied and tumbled there with Raelus.
And him they haltered by his squirming heels
Until he did confess such villainy
As made me wonder if his wits were sound—
Confessed himself a renegade—a thief—
Ay, even one of them, save that he knew
Not that nice honor even thieves may claim
Among themselves.—And so ran on thro' such
A catalogue of littlenesses, I
For deafest shame had even stopped my ears
But that my wrists were lockt. And when he came

To his confession of his lie at court,
By which was gained our knightly sympathy
And valiant service on this fools' crusade,
I seemed to feel the redness of my blush
Soak thro' my very soul. There I brake in:
'Fair lady and most gallant,—to my shame
Do I admit we have been duped by such
An ingrate as this bundled lump of flesh
That I am helpless to rise up and spurn:
Unbind me, and I promise such amends
As knightly hands may deign to wreak upon
A thing so vile as he.' Then, laughing, she:
'First tell me, by your honor, where await
Your knightly brothers and my enemies.'
To which I answered, truthfully, I knew
Not where you lingered, but not close at hand
I was assured. Then all abrupt, she turned:
'Get every one within! We ride at once!'
And scarce a dozen minutes ere they came
Outpouring from the cave in such a guise
As made me smile from very wonderment.—
From head to heel in woman's dress they came,
Clad richly, too, and trapped and tricked withal
As maidenly, but in the face and hand,
As ever damsels flock at holiday.
Then were their chargers bro't, caparisoned
In keeping; and they mounted, lifting us,
Still bounden, with much jest and mockery
Of soft caress and wanton blandishments,
As tho' they were of sex their dress declared.
And so they carried us until they came
Upon the road there as it nicks the copse:

And so drew rein, dismounted, leaving some
To guard their horses; hurried us across
This footway to the middle of the flat.
Here Raelus was bounden to a tree,
Stript to the waist; my fetters cut, and then
A long, keen switch put in my hand, and 'Strike!
Strike as all duty bids you!' said the queen.
And so I did, with right good will at first;
Till, softened as I heard the wretch's prayers
Of anguish, I at last withheld my hand.
'What! tiring?' chirpt the queen: 'Give me the stick!'
And swish, and swish, and mercy how it rained!
Then all the others, forming circlewise,
Danced round and round the howling wretch, and jeered
And japed at him, and mocked and scoffed at him,
And spat upon him. And I turned away
And hid my face; then raised it pleadingly:
Nor would they listen my appeal for him;
But left him so, and thonged and took me back
Across the mere, and drew the bridge, that none
Might go to him, and carried me with them
Far on their way, and freed me once again;
And back I turned, tho' loath, to succor him."
And even as he ceased they heard the wail
Break out anew, and crossed without a word,
And Raelus they found, and without word
They loosed him. And he brake away and ran
As runs a lie the truth is hard upon.

Thus did it fare with Raelus. And they
Who knew of it said naught at court of it,
Nor from that day spake ever of him once,
Nor heard of him again, nor cared to hear.

287 *My Bachelor Chum*

O A corpulent man is my bachelor chum,
With a neck apoplectic and thick—
An abdomen on him as big as a drum,
And a fist big enough for the stick;
With a walk that for grace is clear out of the case,
And a wobble uncertain—as though
His little bow-legs had forgotten the pace
That in youth used to favor him so.

He is forty, at least; and the top of his head
Is a bald and a glittering thing;
And his nose and his two chubby cheeks are as red
As three rival roses in spring.
His mouth is a grin with the corners tucked in,
And his laugh is so breezy and bright
That it ripples his features and dimples his chin
With a billowy look of delight.

He is fond of declaring he "don't care a straw"—
That "the ills of a bachelor's life
Are blisses compared with a mother-in-law,
And a boarding-school miss for a wife!"
So he smokes and he drinks, and he jokes and he winks,
And he dines and he wines, all alone,
With a thumb ever ready to snap as he thinks
Of the comforts he never has known.

But up in his den—(Ah, my bachelor chum!)—
I have sat with him there in the gloom,
When the laugh of his lips died away to become
But a phantom of mirth in the room.

And to look on him there you would love him, for all
His ridiculous ways, and be dumb
As the little girl-face that smiles down from the wall
On the tears of my bachelor chum.

288 *An Old Friend*

HEY, Old Midsummer! are you here again,
With all your harvest-store of olden joys,—
Vast overhanging meadow-lands of rain,
And drowsy dawns, and noons when golden grain
Nods in the sun, and lazy truant boys
Drift ever listlessly adown the day,
Too full of joy to rest, and dreams to play.

The same old Summer, with the same old smile
Beaming upon us in the same old way
We knew in childhood! Though a weary while
Since that far time, yet memories reconcile
The heart with odorous breaths of clover-hay;
And again I hear the doves, and the sun streams through
The old barn-door just as it used to do.

And so it seems like welcoming a friend—
An old, *old* friend, upon his coming home
From some far country—coming home to spend
Long, loitering days with me: And I extend
My hand in rapturous glee:—And so you've come!—
Ho, I'm so glad! Come in and take a chair:
Well, this is just like *old* times, I declare!

289

Edgar Wilson Nye

FEBRUARY 22, 1896

THE saddest silence falls when Laughter lays
Finger on lip, and falteringly breaks
The glad voice into dying minor shakes
And quavers, lorn as airs the wind-harp plays
At urge of drearest Winter's bleakest days:
A troubled hush, in which all hope forsakes
Us, and the yearning upstrained vision aches
With tears that drown e'en heaven from our gaze.
Such silence—after such glad merriment!
O prince of halest humor, wit and cheer!
Could you yet speak to us, I doubt not we
Should catch your voice, still blithely eloquent
Above all murmurings of sorrow here,
Calling your love back to us laughingly.

290

I Smoke My Pipe

I CAN'T extend to every friend
In need a helping hand—
No matter though I wish it so,
'Tis not as Fortune planned;
But haply may I fancy they
Are men of different stripe
Than others think who hint and wink,—
And so—I smoke my pipe!

A golden coal to crown the bowl—
My pipe and I alone,—
I sit and muse with idler views
Perchance than I should own:—

It might be worse to own the purse
Whose glutted bowels gripe
In little qualms of stinted alms;
And so I smoke my pipe.

And if inclined to moor my mind
And cast the anchor Hope,
A puff of breath will put to death
The morbid misanthrope
That lurks inside—as errors hide
In standing forms of type
To mar at birth some line of worth;
And so I smoke my pipe.

The subtle stings misfortune flings
Can give me little pain
When my narcotic spell has wrought
This quiet in my brain:
When I can waste the past in taste
So luscious and so ripe
That like an elf I hug myself;
And so I smoke my pipe.

And wrapped in shrouds of drifting clouds
I watch the phantom's flight,
Till alien eyes from Paradise
Smile on me as I write:
And I forgive the wrongs that live,
As lightly as I wipe
Away the tear that rises here;
And so I smoke my pipe.

291 *Dave Field*

LET me write you a rune of a rhyme, Dave Field,
For the sake of the past we knew,
When we were vagrants along the road,
Yet glad as the skies were blue;
When we struck hands, as in alien lands
Old friend to old friend is revealed,
And each hears a tongue that he understands,
And a laugh that he loves, Dave Field.

Ho! let me chant you a stave, Dave Field,
Of those indolent days of ours,
With our chairs atilt at the wayside inn
Or our backs in the woodland flowers;
With your pipe alit, and the breath of it
Like a nimbus about your head,
While I sipped, like a monk, of your winey wit,
With my matins all unsaid.

Let me drone you a dream of the world, Dave Field,
And the glory it held for us—
You with your pencil-and-canvas dreams,
And I with my pencil thus;
Yet with never a thought of the prize we sought,
Being at best but a pain,
As we looked from the heights and our blurred eyes caught
The scenes of our youth again.

O, let me sing you a song, Dave Field,
Jolly and hale, but yet
With a quaver of pathos along the lines,
And the throb of a vain regret;—

A sigh for the dawn long dead and gone,
  But a laugh for the dawn concealed,
As bravely a while we still toil on
  Toward the topmost heights, Dave Field.

292 *The Young Old Man*

VOLUNTARY BY ARTLESS "LITTLE BROTHER"

MAMMA is a widow: There's only us three—
Our pretty Mamma, little sister, and me:
And we've come to live in this new neighborhood
Where all seems so quiet, old-fashioned and good.
  Mamma sits and sews at the window, and I—
  I'm out at the gate when an old man goes by—
  Such a *lovely* old man,—though I can't tell you why,
    Unless it's his greeting,—"Good morning!
  Good morning! good morning!" the old man will say,—
  "Fine bracing weather we're having to-day!—
      And how's little brother—
      And sister—and mother?—
      So dear to each other!—
        Good morning!"

The old man goes by, in his glossy high-hat,
And stripe-trousers creased, and all turned-up, at that,
And his glancing nose-glasses—and pleasantest eyes,
As he smiles on me, always in newer surprise:
  And though his mustache is as white as the snow,
  He wears it waxed out and all pointed, you know,
  And gloves, and high collar and bright, jaunty bow,
    And stylish umbrella—"Good morning!

Good morning! good morning!" the old man will say,—
"Fine falling weather we're promised to-day!—
And how's little brother—
And sister—and mother?—
So fond of each other!—
Good morning!"

. . . . . .

It's Christmas!—it's Christmas! and oh, but we're gay!
The postman's been here, and Ma says, "Run and play:—
You must leave your Mamma to herself for a while!"
And so sweet is her voice, and so tender her smile!—
And she looks *so* pretty and happy and—Well!—
She's just too delicious for language to tell!—
So Sis hugs her *more*—and *I* answer the bell,—
And there in the doorway—"Good morning!—
Good morning! good morning! good morning, I say!
Fine Christmas weather we're having to-day!—
And how 's little brother—
Dear sister—er, ruther—
Why, here *is* your *mother* . . .
Good morning!"

293 *Lockerbie Fair*

O THE Lockerbie Fair!—Have you heard of its fame
And its fabulous riches, too rare for a name!—
The gold of the noon of the June-time refined
To the Orient-Night, till the eyes and the mind
Are dazed with the sights, in the earth and the air,
Of the opulent splendors of Lockerbie Fair

What more fortunate fate might to mortal befall,
Midst the midsummer beauty and bloom of it all,
Than to glit with the moon o'er the rapturous scene
And twink with the stars as they laughingly lean
O'er the luminous revel and glamour and glare
Fused in one dazzling glory at Lockerbie Fair.

The Night, like a queen in her purple and lace,
With her diamonded brow, and imperious grace,
As she leads her fair votaries, train upon train,
A-dance thro' the feasts of this mystic domain
To the mandolin's twang, and the warble and blare
Of voice, flute and bugle at Lockerbie Fair.

All strange, ever-changing, enchanted delights
Found now in this newer Arabian Nights,—
Where each lovely maid is a Princess, and each
Lucky swain an Aladdin—all treasures in reach
Of the *"lamps"* and the *"rings"*—and with *Genii* to spare,
Simply waiting your orders, at Lockerbie Fair.

294 *Ylladmar*

HER hair was, oh, so dense a blur
Of darkness, midnight envied her;
And stars grew dimmer in the skies
To see the glory of her eyes;
And all the summer-rain of light
That showered from the moon at night
Fell o'er her features as the gloom
Of twilight o'er a lily-bloom.

The crimson fruitage of her lips
Was ripe and lush with sweeter wine
Than burgundy or muscadine
Or vintage that the burgher sips
In some old garden on the Rhine:
And I to taste of it could well
Believe my heart a crucible
Of molten love—and I could feel
The drunken soul within me reel
And rock and stagger till it fell.

And do you wonder that I bowed
Before her splendor as a cloud
Of storm the golden-sandaled sun
Had set his conquering foot upon?
And did she will it, I could lie
In writhing rapture down and die—
A death so full of precious pain
I'd waken up to die again.

295 *"Go Read Your Book!"*

HOW many times that grim old phrase
Has silenced me, in childish days!—
And *now*—as then it did—
The phantom admonition, clear
And dominant, rings,—and I hear,
And do as I am bid.

"Go read your book!" my good old sire
Commanded, in affected ire,

When I, with querying look
And speech, dared vex his studious mind
With idle words of any kind.—
And so I read my book.

Though seldom, in that *wisest* age,
Did I discern on Wisdom's page
More than the *task:* That led
At least to *thinking,* and at last
To reading less, and not so fast,
And longing as I read.

And, lo! in gracious time, I grew
To love a book all through and through!—
With yearning eyes I look
On any volume,—old, maybe,
Or new—'t is meat and drink to me.—
And so I read my book.

Old dog's-eared Readers, scarred and inked
With school-boy hatred, long extinct;—
Old Histories that bored
Me worst of all the school;—old, worn
Arithmetics, frayed, ripped, and torn—
Now Ye are all adored.

And likewise I revere and praise
My sire, as now, with vainest gaze
And hearing, still I look
For the old face so grave yet dear—
Nay, still I *see,* and still I *hear!*
And so I read my book.

Next even to my nearest kin —
My wife—my children romping in
From school to ride my knee,—
I love a book, and dispossess
My lap of it with loathfulness,
For all their love of me.

For, grave or gay the book, it takes
Me as an equal—calms, or makes
Me, laughing, overlook
My little self—forgetful all
Of being so exceeding small.
And so I read my book.

296 *The Tribute of His Home*

BENJAMIN HARRISON, INDIANAPOLIS
MARCH 14, 1901

BOWED, midst a universal grief that makes
Columbia's self a stricken mourner, cast
In tears beneath the old Flag at half-mast,
A sense of glory rouses us and breaks
Like song upon our sorrowing and shakes
The dew from our drenched eyes, that smile at last
In childish pride—as though the great man passed
To his most high reward for our poor sakes.
Loved of all men—we muse,—yet ours he was—
Choice of the Nation's mighty brotherhood—
Her soldier, statesman, ruler.—Ay, but then,
We knew him—long before the world's applause
And after—as a neighbor, kind and good,
Our common friend and fellow-citizen.

297 *Songs of a Life-Time*

MRS. SARAH T. BOLTON'S POEMS

1897

SONGS of a Life-Time—with the Singer's head
A silvery glory shining midst the green
Of laurel-leaves that bind a brow serene
And godlike as was ever garlanded.—
So seems *her* glory who herein has wed
Melodious Beauty to the strong of mien
And kingly Speech—made kinglier by this queen
In lilied cadence voiced and raimented.
Songs of a Life-Time; by your own sweet stress
Of singing were ye loved of bygone years—
As through our day ye are, and shall be hence,
Till *fame divine* marks your melodiousness
And on the Singer's lips, with smiles and tears,
Seals there the kiss of love and reverence.

298 *Unless*

WHO has not *wanted* does not guess
What plenty is.—Who has not groped
In depths of doubt and hopelessness
Has never truly hoped.—
Unless, sometimes, a shadow falls
Upon his mirth, and veils his sight,
And from the darkness drifts the light
Of love at intervals.

And that most dear of everything,
I hold, is love; and who can sit
With lightest heart and laugh and sing,
Knows not the worth of it.—
Unless, in some strange throng, perchance,
He feels how thrilling sweet it is,
One yearning look that answers his—
The troth of glance and glance.

Who knows not pain, knows not, alas!
What pleasure is.—Who knows not of
The bitter cup that will not pass,
Knows not the taste of love.
O souls that thirst, and hearts that fast,
And natures faint with famishing,
God lift and lead and safely bring
You to your own at last!

299 *Envoy*

BE our fortunes as they may,
Touched with loss or sorrow,
Saddest eyes that weep to-day
May be glad to-morrow.

Yesterday the rain was here,
And the winds were blowing—
Sky and earth and atmosphere
Brimmed and overflowing.

But to-day the sun is out,
  And the drear November
We were then so vexed about
  Now we scarce remember.

Yesterday you lost a friend—
  Bless your heart and love it!—
For you scarce could comprehend
  All the aching of it;—

But I sing to you and say:
  Let the lost friend sorrow—
Here's another come to-day,
  Others may to-morrow.

MORNING

300 *Morning*

BREATH of Morning—breath of May—
With your zest of yesterday
And crisp, balmy freshness, smite
Our old hearts with Youth's delight.

Tilt the cap of Boyhood—yea,
Where no "forelock" waves, to-day,—
Back, in breezy, cool excess,
Stroke it with the old caress.

Let us see as we have seen—
Where all paths are dewy-green,
And all human-kind are kin—
Let us be as we have been!

301 *The Great God Pan*

"What was he doing, the great god Pan?"
—Mrs. Browning.

O PAN is the goodliest god, I wist,
Of all of the lovable gods that be!—
For his two strong hands were the first to twist
From the depths of the current, through spatter and mist,
The long-hushed reeds that he pressed in glee
To his murmurous mouth, as he chuckled and kissed
Their souls into melody.

And the wanton winds are in love with Pan:
They loll in the shade with him day by day;
And betimes as beast, and betimes as man,
They love him as only the wild winds can,—
Or sleeking the coat of his limbs one way,
Or brushing his brow with the locks they fan
To the airs he loves to play.

And he leans by the river, in gloom and gleam,
Blowing his reeds as the breezes blow—
His cheeks puffed out, and his eyes in a dream,
And his hoof-tips, over the leaves in the stream,
Tapping the time of the tunes that flow
As sweet as the drowning echoes seem
To his rollicking wraith below.

302 *His Heart of Constant Youth*

"And I never hear the drums beat
that I do not think of him."
—Major Charles L. Holstein.

TURN through his life, each word and deed
Now sacred as it is—
How helped and soothed we are to read
A history like his!

To turn the years, in far review,
And find him—as To-day—
In orchard-lands of bloom and dew
Again a boy at play:

The jeweled grass—the sumptuous trees
  And flower and fragrance there,
With song of birds and drone of bees
  And Springtime everywhere:

Turn any chapter that we will,
  Read any page, in sooth,
We find his glad heart owning still
  The freshness of his youth.

With such a heart of tender care
  He loved his own, and thus
His home was, to the loved ones there,
  A temple glorious.

And, ever youthful, still his love
  Enshrined, all manifold,
The people—all the poor thereof,
  The helpless and the old.

And little children—Ah! to them
  His love was as the sun
Wrought in a magic diadem
  That crowned them, every one.

And ever young his reverence for
  The laws: like morning dew
He shone as counsel, orator,
  And clear logician, too.

And, as a boy, his gallant soul
  Made answer to the trill
Of battle-trumpet and the roll
  Of drums that echo still:

His comrades—as his country, dear—
  They knew, and ever knew
That buoyant, boyish love, sincere
  As truth itself is true:

He marched with them, in tireless tramp—
  Laughed, cheered and lifted up
The battle-chorus, and in camp
  Shared blanket, pipe and cup.

His comrades! . . . When you meet again,
  In anguish though you bow,
Remember how he loved you then,
  And how he loves you *now*.

303 *The Soldier*

THE DEDICATION OF THE SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' MONUMENT, INDIANAPOLIS, MAY 15, 1902

THE Soldier!—meek the title, yet divine:
  Therefore, with reverence, as with wild acclaim,
We fain would honor in exalted line
  The glorious lineage of the glorious name:
The Soldier.—Lo, he ever was and is,
  Our Country's high custodian, by right
Of patriot blood that brims that heart of his
  With fiercest love, yet honor infinite.

The Soldier—within whose inviolate care
  The Nation takes repose,—her inmost fane
Of Freedom ever has its guardian there,
  As have her forts and fleets on land and main:
The Heavenward Banner, as its ripples stream
  In happy winds, or float in languid flow,
Through silken meshes ever sifts the gleam
  Of sunshine on its Sentinel below.

The Soldier!—Why, the very utterance
  Is music—as of rallying bugles, blent
With blur of drums and cymbals and the chants
  Of battle-hymns that shake the continent!—
The thunder-chorus of a world is stirred
  To awful, universal jubilee,—
Yet ever through it, pure and sweet, are heard
  The prayers of Womanhood, and Infancy.

Even as a fateful tempest sudden loosed
  Upon our senses, so our thoughts are blown
Back where The Soldier battled, nor refused
  A grave all nameless in a clime unknown.—
The Soldier—though, perchance, worn, old and gray:
  The Soldier—though, perchance, the merest lad,—
The Soldier—though he gave his life away,
  Hearing the shout of "Victory," was glad;

Aye, glad and grateful, that in such a cause
  His veins were drained at Freedom's holy shrine—
Rechristening the land—as first it was,—
  His blood poured thus in sacramental sign

Of new baptism of the hallowed name
"My Country"—now on every lip once more
And blest of God with still enduring fame.—
This thought even then The Soldier gloried o'er—

The dying eyes upraised in rapture there,—
As, haply, he remembered how a breeze
Once swept his boyish brow and tossed his hair,
Under the fresh bloom of the orchard-trees—
When his heart hurried, in some wistful haste
Of ecstasy, and his quick breath was wild
And balmy-sharp and chilly-sweet to taste,—
And he towered godlike, though a trembling child!

Again, through luminous mists, he saw the skies'
Far fields white-tented; and in gray and blue
And dazzling gold, he saw vast armies rise
And fuse in fire—from which, in swiftest view,
The Old Flag soared, and friend and foe as one
Blent in an instant's vivid mirage . . . Then
The eyes closed smiling on the smiling sun
That changed the seer to a child again.—

And, even so, The Soldier slept.—Our own!—
The Soldier of our plaudits, flowers and tears,—
O this memorial of bronze and stone—
His love shall outlast *this* a thousand years!
Yet, as the towering symbol bids us do,—
With soul saluting, as salutes the hand,
We answer as The Soldier answered to
The Captain's high command.

304 *The Little Woman*

MY little woman, of you I sing
With a fervor all divine,—
For I know the clasp of the hands that cling
So closely here in mine.

Though the rosy palms I used to press
Are faded and worn with care,
And tremulous is the old caress
That nestles in my hair,—

Your heart to me is a changeless page;
I have read it bit by bit,
From the dawn of love to the dusk of age,—
And the tale is Holy Writ.

Fold your eyes,—for the twilight bends
As a mother o'er her child—
Even as when, in the long-lost Then,
You bent o'er ours and smiled. . . .

(Nay, but I spoke all unaware!
See! I am kneeling, too,
And with mine, dear, is the rose's prayer,
With a blur of tears and dew.)

But O little woman, I often grieve,
As I think of the vanished years
And trace the course of the cares that leave
Your features dim with tears:

I often grieve, for the frowns I wore
  When the world seemed all untrue,—
When my hard, proud heart was sick and sore
  And would not come to you!

I often grieve, as I hold your hand—
  As I hold your hand to-night,—
That it takes so long to understand
  The lesson of love aright!

But sing the song that I taught you once,
  Dear little woman, as *then*
Away far back in the golden months;—
  Sing me the song again!

For, as under the stars we loved of yore
  When the nights of love were long,
Your poor, pale lips grow glad once more
  And I kiss them into song:—

My little woman's hands are fair
  As even the moonflowers be
When fairies creep in their depths and sleep
  Till the sun leaps out o' the sea.

And O her eyes, they are spheres of light—
  So brighter than stars are they,
The brightest day is the darkest night
  When my little woman's away.

For my little woman has ever a tear
And a sigh when I am sad;
And I have a thousand smiles for her
When my little woman is glad.

But my little woman is strong and brave,
For all of her tears and sighs,
Her stanch little heart knows how to behave
Whenever the storms arise.

My little woman, of you I sing
With a fervor all divine,—
For I know the clasp of the hands that cling
So closely here in mine.

305 *America*

BUFFALO, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 14, 1901

O Thou, America—Messiah of Nations!

I

IN the need that bows us thus
America!
Shape a mighty song for us—
America!
Song to whelm a hundred years'
Roar of wars and rain of tears
'Neath a world's triumphant cheers:
America! America!

II

Lift the trumpet to thy mouth,
America!
East and West and North and South—
America!
Call us round the dazzling shrine
Of the starry old ensign—
New-baptized in blood of thine,
America! America!

III

Dying eyes through pitying mists,
America!
See the Assassin's shackled wrists,
America!
Patient eyes that turn their sight
From all blackening crime and blight
Still toward Heaven's holy light—
America! America!

IV

High o'erlooking sea and land,
America!
Trustfully with outheld hand,
America!
Thou dost welcome all in quest
Of thy freedom, peace and rest—
Every exile is thy guest,
America! America!

V

Thine a universal love,
America!
Thine the cross and crown thereof,
America!
Aid us, then, to sing thy worth:
God hath builded, from thy birth,
The first nation of the earth—
America! America!

306 *General Lew Wallace*

FEBRUARY 15, 1905

NAY, Death, thou mightiest of all
Dread conquerors—thou dreadest chief,—
Thy heavy hand can here but fall
Light as the Autumn leaf:
As vainly, too, its weight is laid
Upon the warrior's knightly sword;—
Still through the charge and cannonade
It flashes for the Lord.

In forum—as in battlefield—
His voice rang for the truth—the right—
Keyed with the shibboleth that pealed
His Soul forth to the fight:
The inspiration of his pen
Glowed as a star, and lit anew
The faces and the hearts of men
Watching, the long night through.

A destiny ordained—divine
  It seemed to hosts of those who saw
His rise since youth and marked the line
  Of his ascent with awe:—
From the now-storied little town
  That gave him birth and worth, behold,
Unto this day of his renown,
  His sword and word of gold.

Serving the Land he loved so well—
  Hailed midsea or in foreign port,
Or in strange-bannered citadel
  Or Oriental Court,—
He—honored for his Nation's sake,
  And loved and honored for his own—
Hath seen his Flag in glory shake
  Above the Pagan Throne.

307 *A Humble Singer*

A MODEST singer, with meek soul and heart,
  Sat, yearning that his art
Might but inspire and suffer him to sing
Even the simplest thing.

And as he sang thus humbly, came a Voice:—
"All mankind shall rejoice,
Hearing thy pure and simple melody
Sing on immortally."

308 *The Hoosier in Exile*

THE Hoosier in Exile—a toast
That by its very sound
Moves us, at first, to tears almost,
And sympathy profound;
But musing for a little space,
We lift the glass and smile,
And poise it with a royal grace—
The Hoosier in Exile!

The Hoosier in Exile, forsooth!
For though his steps may roam
The earth's remotest bounds, in truth
His heart is ever home!
O loyal still to every tie
Of native fields and streams,
His boyhood friends, and paths whereby
He finds them in his dreams!

Though he may fare the thronging maze
Of alien city streets,
His thoughts are set in grassy ways
And woodlands' cool retreats;
Forever, clear and sweet above
The traffic's roar and din,
In breezy groves he hears the dove,
And is at peace within.

When newer friends and generous hands
Advance him; he returns
Due gratefulness, yet, pausing, stands
As one who strangely yearns

To pay still further thanks, but sighs
  To think he knows not where,
Till—like as life—with misty eyes
  He sees his mother there.

The Hoosier in Exile? Ah, well,
  Accept the phrase, but know
The Hoosier heart must ever dwell
  Where orchard blossoms grow
The whitest, apples reddest, and,
  In cornlands, mile on mile,
The old homesteads forever stand—
  "The Hoosier in Exile!"

309 *Longfellow*

1807–February 27—1907

O GENTLEST kinsman of Humanity!
Thy love hath touched all hearts, even as thy Song
Hath touched all chords of music that belong
To the quavering heaven-strung harp of harmony:
Thou hast made man to feel and hear and see
Divinely;—made the weak to be the strong;
By thy melodious magic, changed the wrong
To changeless right—and joyed and wept as we.
Worlds listen, lulled and solaced at the spell
That folds and holds us—soul and body, too,—
As though thy songs, as loving arms in stress
Of sympathy and trust ineffable,
Where thrown about us thus by one who knew
Our common human need of kindliness,

310 *The Quest of the Fathers*

WHAT were our Forefathers trying to find
When they weighed anchor, that desperate hour
They turned from home, and the warning wind
Sighed in the sails of the old Mayflower?
What sought they that could compensate
Their hearts for the loved ones left behind—
The household group at the glowing grate?—
What were our Forefathers trying to find?

What were they trying to find more dear
Than their native land and its annals old,—
Its throne—its church—and its worldly cheer—
Its princely state, and its hoarded gold?
What more dear than the mounds of green
There o'er the brave sires, slumbering long?
What more fair than the rural scene—
What more sweet than the throstle's song?

Faces pallid, but sternly set,
Lips locked close, as in voiceless prayer,
And eyes with never a teardrop wet—
Even the tenderest woman's there!
But O the light from the soul within,
As each spake each with a flashing mind—
As the lightning speaks to its kith and kin!
What were our Forefathers trying to find?

Argonauts of a godless day—
Seers of visions, and dreamers vain!
Their ship's foot set in a pathless way,—
The fogs, the mists, and the blinding rain!—

When the gleam of sun, and moon and star
  Seemed lost so long they were half forgot—
When the fixed eyes found nor near nor far,
  And the night whelmed all, and the world was not.

And yet, befriended in some strange wise,
  They groped their way in the storm and stress
Through which—though their look found not the skies—
  The Lord's look found *them* ne'ertheless—
Found them, yea, in their piteous lot,
  As they in their faith from the first divined—
Found them, and favored them—too. But what—
  What were our Forefathers trying to find?

Numb and agasp, with the frost for breath,
  They came on a frozen shore, at last,
As bleak and drear as the coasts of death,—
  And yet their psalm o'er the wintry blast
Rang glad as though 'twere the chiming mirth
  Of jubilant children landing there—
Until o'er all of the icy earth
  The snows seemed warm, as they knelt in prayer.

For, lo! they were close on the trail they sought:—
  In the sacred soil of the rights of men
They marked where the Master-hand had wrought;
  And there they garnered and sowed again.—
Their land—then *ours,* as to-day it is,
  With its flag of heaven's own light designed,
And God's vast love o'er all. . . . And *this*
  Is what our Forefathers were trying to find.

311 *The Loveliness*

AH, what a long and loitering way
And ever-lovely way, in truth,
We travel on from day to day
Out of the realms of youth!

How eagerly we onward press
The lovely path that lures us still
With ever-changing loveliness
Of grassy vale and hill:

Of groves of May and morning-lands
Dew-diamonded and gemmed with bloom;
With amber streams and golden sands
And aisles of gleam and gloom;

Where lovely little Fairy-folk,
In careless ambush, pipe and call
From tousled ferns 'neath elm and oak
By shoal and waterfall:

Transparent even as the stream,
The gnarlèd prison-tree reveals
Its lovely Dryad in a dream
That scarce itself conceals;

The sudden redbird trips the sight
And tricks the ear—or doubtless we
With happy palms had clapped the Sprite
In new captivity.

On—on, through all the gathering years,
  Still gleams the loveliness, though seen
Through dusks of loss and mists of tears
  That vainly intervene.

Time stints us not of lovely things—
  Old Age hath still a treasure-store,—
The loveliness of songs and wings
  And voices on before.—

And—loveliness beyond all grace
  Of lovely words to say or sing,—
The loveliness of Hope's fair face
  Forever brightening.

312 *The Country Editor*

A THOUGHTFUL brow and face—of sallow hue,
  But warm with welcome, as we find him there,
  Throned in his old misnomered "easy-chair,"
Scrawling a "leader," or a book-review;
Or staring through the roof for something new
  With which to lift a wretched rival's hair,
  Or blow some petty clique in empty air
And snap the party-ligaments in two.
  A man he is deserving well of thee,—
So be compassionate—yea, pay thy dues,
  Nor pamper him with thy spring-poetry,
But haul him wood, or something he can use;
  And promptly act, nor tarry long when he
  Gnaweth his pen and glareth rabidly.

313 *His Last Picture*

THE skies have grown troubled and dreary;
The clouds gather fold upon fold;
The hand of the painter is weary
And the pencil has dropped from its hold:
The easel still leans in the grasses,
And the palette beside on the lawn,
But the rain o'er the sketch as it passes
Weeps low—for the artist is gone.

The flowers whose fairy-like features
Smiled up in his own as he wrought
And the leaves and the ferns were his teachers,
And the tints of the sun what they taught;
The low-swinging vines, and the mosses—
The shadow-filled boughs of the trees,
And the blossomy spray as it tosses
The song of the bird to the breeze.

The silent white laugh of the lily
He learned; and the smile of the rose
Glowed back on his spirit until he
Had mastered the blush as it glows;
And his pencil has touched and caressed them,
And kissed them, through breaths of perfume,
To the canvas that yet shall have blessed them
With years of unwithering bloom.

Then come!—Leave his palette and brushes
And easel there, just as his hand
Has left them, ere through the dark hushes
Of death, to the shadowy land,

He wended his way, happy-hearted
As when, in his youth, his rapt eyes
Swept the pathway of Fame where it started,
To where it wound into the skies.

314 *An Empty Nest*

I FIND an old deserted nest,
Half-hidden in the underbrush:
A withered leaf, in phantom jest,
Has nestled in it like a thrush
With weary, palpitating breast.

I muse as one in sad surprise
Who seeks his childhood's home once more,
And finds it in a strange disguise
Of vacant rooms and naked floor,
With sudden teardrops in his eyes.

An empty nest! It used to bear
A happy burden, when the breeze
Of summer rocked it, and a pair
Of merry tattlers told the trees
What treasures they had hidden there.

But Fancy, flitting through the gleams
Of youth's sunshiny atmosphere,
Has fallen in the past, and seems,
Like this poor leaflet nestled here,—
A phantom guest of empty dreams.

315 *A Spring Song and a Later*

SHE sang a song of May for me,
Wherein once more I heard
The mirth of my glad infancy—
The orchard's earliest bird—
The joyous breeze among the trees
New-clad in leaf and bloom,
And there the happy honey-bees
In dewy gleam and gloom.

So purely, sweetly on the sense
Of heart and spirit fell
Her song of Spring, its influence—
Still irresistible,—
Commands me here—with eyes ablur—
To mate her bright refrain,
Though I but shed a rhyme for her
As dim as Autumn rain.

316 *On Reading Dr. Henry Van Dyke's Volume of Poems—Music*

MUSIC!—Yea, and the airs you play—
Out of the faintest Far-Away
And the sweetest, too; and the dearest Here,
With its quavering voice but its bravest cheer—
The prayer that aches to be all expressed—
The kiss of love at its tenderest:
Music—music, with glad heart throbs
Within it; and music with tears and sobs
Shaking it, as the startled soul
Is shaken at shriek of the fife and roll
Of the drums;—then as suddenly lulled again
With the whisper and lip of the summer rain:

Mist of melodies fragrance-fine—
The birdsong flicked from the eglantine
With the dews when the springing bramble throws
A rarer drench on its ripest rose,
And the wingèd song soars up and sinks
To the dove's dim coo by the river-brinks
Where the ripple's voice still laughs along
Its glittering path of light and song.
Music, O Poet, and all your own
By right of capture and that alone,—
For in it we hear the harmony
Born of the earth and the air and the sea,
And over and under it, and all through,
We catch the chime of The Anthem, too.

317 *The Rose-Lady*

TO THE ROSES

I DREAM that you are kisses Allah sent
In forms material, that all the earth
May taste of you and guess of Heaven's worth,
Since it can waste such sweetness with content,—
Seeing you showered o'er the Battlement—
By Angel-hands plucked ripe from lips of mirth
And flung in lavish clusters, yet no dearth
Of rapture for the Anthem! . . . I have bent
Above you, nestled in some low retreat,
Pressing your velvet mouths against the dust,
And, ever nurturing this old conceit,
Have lifted up your lips in perfect trust
Against my mouth, nor found them the less sweet
For having kissed the dust beneath my feet.

318 *Henry Irving*

[October 13, 1905]

'TIS Art reclaims him! By those gifts of hers
With which so nobly she endowed his mind,
He brought back Shakespeare, in quick grief and glee—
Tasting the world's salt tears and sweet applause,—
For, even as through his master's, so there ran
Through all his multitudinous characters
Kinship and love and honor of mankind.
So all mankind shall grace his memory
In musing proudly: Great as his genius was,
Great likewise was the man.

319 *We Must Believe*

"Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief."

I

WE must believe—
Being from birth endowed with love and trust—
Born unto loving;—and how simply just
That love—that faith!—even in the blossom-face
The babe drops dreamward in its resting-place,
Intuitively conscious of the sure
Awakening to rapture ever pure
And sweet and saintly as the mother's own
Or the awed father's, as his arms are thrown
O'er wife and child, to round about them weave
And wind and bind them as one harvest-sheaf
Of love—to cleave to, and *forever* cleave. . . .
Lord, I believe:
Help Thou mine unbelief.

II

We must believe—
Impelled since infancy to seek some clear
Fulfilment, still withheld all seekers here;—
For never have we seen perfection nor
The glory we are ever seeking for:
But we *have* seen—all mortal souls as one—
Have seen its *promise,* in the morning sun—
Its blest assurance, in the stars of night;—
The ever-dawning of the dark to light;—
The tears down-falling from all eyes that grieve—
The eyes uplifting from all deeps of grief,
Yearning for what at last we shall receive. . . .
Lord, I believe:
Help Thou mine unbelief.

III

We must believe:
For still all unappeased our hunger goes,
From life's first waking, to its last repose:
The briefest life of any babe, or man
Outwearing even the allotted span,
Is each a life unfinished—incomplete:
For these, then, of th' outworn, or unworn feet
Denied one toddling step— O there must be
Some fair, green, flowery pathway endlessly
Winding through lands Elysian! Lord, receive
And lead each as Thine Own Child—even the Chief
Of us who didst Immortal life achieve. . . .
Lord, I believe:
Help Thou mine unbelief.

320 *Even as a Child*

CANTON, SEPTEMBER 19, 1901

EVEN as a child to whom sad neighbors speak
In symbol, saying that his father "sleeps"—
Who feels their meaning, even as his cheek
Feels the first teardrop as it stings and leaps—
Who keenly knows his loss, and yet denies
Its awful import—grieves unreconciled,
Moans, drowses—rouses, with new-drowning eyes—
Even as a child.

Even as a child; with empty, aimless hand
Clasped sudden to the heart all hope deserts—
With tears that blur all lights on sea or land—
The lip that quivers and the throat that hurts:
Even so, the Nation that has known his love
Is orphaned now; and, whelmed in anguish wild,
Knows but its sorrow and the ache thereof,
Even as a child.

321 *An Autumnal Tonic*

WHAT mystery is it? The morning as rare
As the Indian Summer may bring!
A tang in the frost and a spice in the air
That no city poet can sing!
The crimson and amber and gold of the leaves,
As they loosen and flutter and fall
In the path of the park, as it rustlingly weaves
Its way through the maples and under the eaves
Of the sparrows that chatter and call.

What hint of delight is it tingles me through?—
  What vague, indefinable joy?
What yearning for something divine that I knew
  When a wayward and wood-roving boy?
Ah-ha! and O-ho! but I have it, I say—
  Oh, the mystery brightens at last,—
'Tis the longing and zest of the far, far away,
For a bountiful, old-fashioned dinner to-day,
  With the hale harvest-hands of the past.

322

The Rainy Morning

THE dawn of the day was dreary,
  And the lowering clouds o'erhead
Wept in a silent sorrow
  Where the sweet sunshine lay dead;
And a wind came out of the eastward
  Like an endless sigh of pain,
And the leaves fell down in the pathway
  And writhed in the falling rain.

I had tried in a brave endeavor
  To chord my harp with the sun,
But the strings would slacken ever,
  And the task was a weary one:
And so, like a child impatient
  And sick of a discontent,
I bowed in a shower of teardrops
  And mourned with the instrument.

And lo! as I bowed, the splendor
Of the sun bent over me,
With a touch as warm and tender
As a father's hand might be:
And, even as I felt its presence,
My clouded soul grew bright,
And the tears, like the rain of morning,
Melted in mists of light.

323 *We Must Get Home*

WE must get home! How could we stray like this?
So far from home, we know not where it is,—
Only in some fair, apple-blossomy place
Of children's faces—and the mother's face—
We dimly dream it, till the vision clears
Even in the eyes of fancy, glad with tears.

We must get home—for we have been away
So long, it seems forever and a day!
And O so very homesick we have grown,
The laughter of the world is like a moan
In our tired hearing, and its songs as vain,—
We must get home—we must get home again!

We must get home! With heart and soul we yearn
To find the long-lost pathway, and return! . . .
The child's heart lifted from the questing hand
Of old folk, faring weary, hand in hand,
But faces brightening, as if clouds at last
Were showering sunshine on us as they passed.

We must get home: It hurts so, staying here,
Where fond hearts must be wept out tear by tear,
And where to wear wet lashes means, at best,
When most our lack, the least our hope of rest—
When most our need of joy, the more our pain—
We must get home—we must get home again!

We must get home—home to the simple things—
The morning-glories twirling up the strings
And bugling color, as they blared in blue-
And-white o'er garden-gates we scampered through;
The long grape-arbor, with its under-shade
Blue as the green and purple overlaid.

We must get home: All is so quiet there:
The touch of loving hands on brow and hair—
Dim rooms, wherein the sunshine is made mild—
The lost love of the mother and the child
Restored in restful lullabies of rain,—
We must get home—we must get home again!

The rows of sweetcorn and the China beans
Beyond the lettuce-beds where, towering, leans
The giant sunflower in barbaric pride
Guarding the barn-door and the lane outside;
The honeysuckles, midst the hollyhocks,
That clamber almost to the martin-box.

We must get home, where, as we nod and drowse,
Time humors us and tiptoes through the house,
And loves us best when sleeping baby-wise,

With dreams—not tear-drops—brimming our clenched eyes,—
Pure dreams that know nor taint nor earthly stain—
We must get home—we must get home again!

We must get home! There only may we find
The little playmates that we left behind,—
Some racing down the road; some by the brook;
Some droning at their desks, with wistful look
Across the fields and orchards—farther still
Where laughs and weeps the old wheel at the mill.

We must get home! The willow-whistle's call
Trills crisp and liquid as the waterfall—
Mocking the trillers in the cherry-trees
And making discord of such rhymes as these,
That know nor lilt nor cadence but the birds
First warbled—then all poets afterwards.

We must get home; and, unremembering there
All gain of all ambition otherwhere,
Rest—from the feverish victory, and the crown
Of conquest whose waste glory weighs us down.—
Fame's fairest gifts we toss back with disdain—
We must get home—we must get home again!

We must get home again—we must—we must!—
(Our rainy faces pelted in the dust)
Creep back from the vain quest through endless strife
To find not anywhere in all of life
A happier happiness than blest us then. . . .
We must get home—we must get home again!

324

Sis Rapalye

WHEN rainy-greener shoots the grass
And blooms the cherry-tree,
And children laugh by glittering brooks,
Wild with the ecstasy
Of bursting Spring, with twittering bird
And hum of honey-bee,—
"Sis Rapalye!" my spirit shouts . . .
And she is here with me!

As laughs the children, so her laugh
Haunts all the atmosphere;—
Her song is in the brook's refrain;
Her glad eyes, flashing clear,
Are in the morning dews; her speech
Is melody so dear,
The bluebird trills,—"Sis Rapalye!—
I hear!—I hear!—I hear!"

Again in races, at "Recess,"
I see her braided hair
Toss past me as I stay to lift
Her straw hat, fallen there;
The school-bell sends a vibrant pang
My heart can hardly bear.—
Yet still she leads—Sis Rapalye—
And leads me everywhere!

Now I am old.—Yet she remains
The selfsame child of ten.—
Gay, gallant little girl, to race
On into Heaven then!

Yet gallant, gay Sis Rapalye—
  In blossom-time, and when
The trees and grasses beckon her—
  Comes back to us again.

And so, however long since youth
  Whose raptures wild and free
An old man's heart may claim no more,—
  With more than memory
I share the Spring's own joy that brings
  My boyhood back to me
With laughter, blossoms, singing birds
  And sweet Sis Rapalye.

325

The Voice of Peace

INDEPENDENCE BELL
INDIANAPOLIS, NOVEMBER 17, 1904

THOUGH now forever still
  Your voice of jubilee—
We hear—we hear, and ever will,
  The Bell of Liberty!
Clear as the voice to them
  In that far night agone
Pealed from the heavens o'er Bethlehem,
  The voice of Peace peals on!

Stir all your memories up,
  O Independence Bell,
And pour from your inverted cup
  The song we love so well!

As you rang in the dawn
Of Freedom—tolled the knell
Of Tyranny,—ring on—ring on—
O Independence Bell!

Ring numb the wounds of wrong
Unhealed in brain and breast;
With music like a slumber-song
Lull tearful eyes to rest.—
Ring! Independence Bell!
Ring on till worlds to be
Shall listen to the tale you tell
Of Love and Liberty!

326

What Title?

WHAT title best befits the man
We hold our first American?
Or Statesman; Soldier; Hero; Chief,
Whose Country is his first belief;
Or sanest, safest Leader; or
True Patriot; or Orator,
Heard still at Inspiration's height,
Because he speaks for truth and right;
Or shall his people be content
With Our Republic's President,
Or trust his ringing worth to live
In song as Chief Executive?
Nay—his the simplest name—though set
Upon him like a coronet,—
God names our first American
The highest, noblest name—The MAN.

327 *To Edmund Clarence Stedman*

THE AUTHORS' CLUB RECEPTION, NEW YORK
DECEMBER 6, 1900

IT is a various tribute you command,
O Poet-seer and World-sage in one!—
The scholar greets you; and the student; and
The stoic—and his visionary son:
The painter, harvesting with quiet eye
Your features; and the sculptor, dreaming, too,
A classic marble figure, lifted high
Where Fame's immortal ones are waiting you.

The man of letters, with his wistful face;
The grizzled scientist; the young A. B.;
The true historian, of force and grace;
The orator, of pure simplicity;
The journalist—the editor, likewise;
The young war-correspondent; and the old
War-seasoned general, with sagging eyes,
And nerve and hand of steel, and heart of gold.

The serious humorist; the blithe divine;
The lawyer, with that twinkling look he wears;
The bleak-faced man in the dramatic line;
The social lion—and the bulls and bears;
These—these, and more, O favored guest of all,
Have known your benefactions, and are led
To pay their worldly homage, and to call
Down Heaven's blessings on your honored head.

Ideal, to the utmost plea of art—
As real, to labor's most exacting need,—
Your dual services of soul and heart
Enrich the world alike in dream and deed:

For you have brought to us, from out the mine
  Delved but by genius in scholastic soil,
The blended treasures of a wealth divine,—
  Your peerless gift of song—your life of toil.

328 . . . *The Rest*

V. K.—NATURALIST

HE rests at last, as on the mother-breast
  The playworn child at evening lies at rest,—
For he, a buoyant child, in veriest truth,
Has looked on life with eyes of changeless youth:—
Has loved our green old earth here from the hour
Of his first memory of bud and flower—
Of morning's grassy lawns and dewy trees
And orchard-blossoms, singing birds and bees:

When all the world about him was a land
Elysian, with the mother near at hand:
With steadfast gaze of wonder and delight
He marked the miracles of day and night:—
Beheld the kingly sun, in dazzling reign
By day; and, with her glittering, glimmering train
Of stars, he saw the queenly moon possess
Her throne in midmost midnight's mightiness.

All living least of things he ever knew
Of mother Earth's he was a brother to:
The lone rose by the brook—or, under, where
The swaying water-lilies anchored there;

His love dipped even to the glossy things
That walked the waters and forgot their wings
In sheer insanity of some delight
Known but to that ecstatic parasite.

It was enough, thus childishly to sense
All works—since worthy of Omnipotence—
As worshipful: Therefor, as any child,
He knelt in tenderness of tears, or smiled
His gratefulness, as to a playmate glad
To share His pleasures with a poorer lad.
And so he lived: And so he *died?*—Ah, no,
We'll not believe that till he tells us so.

329

The Doctor

[April 29, 1907]

"He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And said: 'Thou ailest here, and here!'"
—*Matthew Arnold.*

WE may idealize the chief of men—
Idealize the humblest citizen,—
Idealize the ruler in his chair—
The poor man, or the poorer millionaire;
Idealize the soldier—sailor—or
The simple man of peace—at war with war;—
The hero of the sword or fife-and-drum. . . .
Why not idealize the Doctor some?

The Doctor is, by principle, we know,
Opposed to sentiment: he veils all show
Of feeling, and is proudest when he hides
The sympathy which natively abides
Within the stoic precincts of a soul
Which owns strict duty as its first control,
And so must guard the ill, lest worse may come. . . .
Why not idealize the Doctor some?

He is the master of emotions—he
Is likewise certain of that mastery,—
Or dare he face contagion in its ire,
Or scathing fever in its leaping fire?
He needs must smile upon the ghastly face
That yearns up toward him in that warded place
Where even the Saint-like Sisters' lips grow dumb.
Why not idealize the Doctor some?

He wisely hides his heart from you and me—
He hath grown tearless, of necessity,—
He knows the sight is clearer, being blind;
He knows the cruel knife is very kind;
Ofttimes he must be pitiless, for thought
Of the remembered wife or child he sought
To save through kindness that was overcome.
Why not idealize the Doctor some?

Bear with him, trustful, in his darkest doubt
Of how the mystery of death comes out;
He knows—he knows,—aye, better yet than we,
That out of Time must dawn Eternity;

He knows his own compassion—what *he* would
Give in relief of all ills, if he could.—
We wait alike one Master: He will come.
Do we idealize the Doctor some?

330 *Ours*

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, DECEMBER 8, 1906

Read at Banquet in Honor of Henry Watterson Upon His Departure for Spain

HERE where of old was heard
The ringing, singing word
That orator and bard
Alike set free
To soar, through heights profound,
Our land's remotest bound,
Till all is holy ground
From sea to sea—

Here still, with voice and pen,
ONE cheers the hopes of men
And gives us faith again—
This gifted one
We hold here as the guest
Most honored—loved the best—
Wisest and worthiest—
Our Watterson.

His spirit is the Seer's—
For, though he sees and hears
Through human doubts and fears,
    His heart is one
With Earth's and the Divine—
With his home-hearts—and mine—
And the child's heart is thine,
    Our Watterson!

Give us to touch and praise
His worth in subtlest ways,
Lest even our fondest gaze
    He fain would shun—
Laugh, though a mist appears—
The glad wine salt with tears—
Laugh, as we drain it—"Here's
    Our Watterson!"

331 *"Out of Reach"*

YOU think them "out of reach," your dead?
    Nay, by my own dead, I deny
Your "out of reach."—Be comforted:
  'Tis not so far to die.

O by their dear remembered smiles
  And outheld hands and welcoming speech,
They wait for us, thousands of miles
  This side of "out of reach."

332

Life at the Lake

THE green below and the blue above!—
The waves caressing the shores they love:
Sails in haven, and sails afar
And faint as the waterlilies are
In inlets haunted of willow wands,
Listless lovers, and trailing hands
With spray to gem them and tan to glove.—
The green below and the blue above.

The blue above and the green below!
Would that the world were always so!—
Always summer and warmth and light,
With mirth and melody day and night!
Birds in the boughs of the beckoning trees,
Chirr of locusts and whiff of breeze—
World-old roses that bud and blow.—
The blue above and the green below.

The green below and the blue above!
Heigh! young hearts and the hopes thereof!—
Kate in the hammock, and Tom sprawled on
The sward—like a lover's picture, drawn
By the lucky dog himself, with Kate
To moon o'er his shoulder and meditate
On a fat old purse or a lank young love.—
The green below and the blue above.

The blue above and the green below!
Shadow and sunshine to and fro.—
Season for dreams—whate'er befall
Hero, heroine, hearts and all!

Wave or wildwood—the blithe bird sings,
And the leaf-hid locust whets his wings—
Just as a thousand years ago—
The blue above and the green below.

333

Our Little Girl

HER heart knew naught of sorrow,
Nor the vaguest taint of sin—
'Twas an ever-blooming blossom
Of the purity within:
And her hands knew only touches
Of the mother's gentle care,
And the kisses and caresses
Through the interludes of prayer.

Her baby-feet had journeyed
Such a little distance here,
They could have found no briars
In the path to interfere;
The little cross she carried
Could not weary her, we know,
For it lay as lightly on her
As a shadow on the snow.

And yet the way before us—
O how empty now and drear!—
How ev'n the dews of roses
Seem as dripping-tears for her!
And the songbirds all seem crying,
As the winds cry and the rain,
All sobbingly,—"We want—we want
Our little girl again!"

334 *A Parting Guest*

WHAT delightful hosts are they—
Life and Love!
Lingeringly I turn away,
This late hour, yet glad enough
They have not withheld from me
Their high hospitality.
So, with face lit with delight
And all gratitude, I stay
Yet to press their hands and say,
"Thanks.—So fine a time! Good night."

335 *Laughing Song*

SING us something full of laughter;
Tune your harp, and twang the strings
Till your glad voice, chirping after,
Mates the song the robin sings:
Loose your lips and let them flutter
Like the wings of wanton birds,—
Though they naught but laughter utter,
Laugh, and we'll not miss the words.

Sing in ringing tones that mingle
In a melody that flings
Joyous echoes in a jingle
Sweeter than the minstrel sings:
Sing of Winter, Spring or Summer,
Clang of war, or low of herds;
Trill of cricket, roll of drummer—
Laugh, and we'll not miss the words.

Like the lisping laughter glancing
From the meadow brooks and springs,
Or the river's ripples dancing
To the tune the current sings—
Sing of Now, and the Hereafter;
Let your glad song, like the birds',
Overflow with limpid laughter—
Laugh, and we'll not miss the words.

336

A Good Man

I

A GOOD man never dies—
In worthy deed and prayer
And helpful hands, and honest eyes,
If smiles or tears be there:
Who lives for you and me—
Lives for the world he tries
To help—he lives eternally.
A good man never dies.

II

Who lives to bravely take
His share of toil and stress,
And, for his weaker fellows' sake,
Makes every burden less,—
He may, at last, seem worn—
Lie fallen—hands and eyes
Folded—yet, though we mourn and mourn,
A good man never dies.

337 *The Children of the Childless*

THE Children of the Childless!—Yours—and mine.—
Yea, though we sit here in the pitying gaze
Of fathers and mothers whose fond fingers twine
Their children's locks of living gold, and praise
With warm, caressing palms, the head of brown,
Or crown
Of opulent auburn, with its amber floss
In all its splendor loosed and jostled down
Across
The mother-lap at prayer.—Yea, even when
These sweet petitioners are kissed, and then
Are kissed and kissed again—
The pursed mouths lifted with the worldlier prayer
That bed and oblivion spare
Them yet a little while
Beside their envied elders by the glow
Of the glad firelight; or wrestling, as they go,
Some promise for the morrow, to beguile
Their long exile
Within the wild waste lands of dream and sleep.
Nay, nay, not even these most stably real
Of children are more loved than our ideal—
More tangible to the soul's touch and sight
Than *these*—*our* children by Divine birthright. . . .
These—these of ours, who soothe us, when we weep,
With tenderest ministries,
Or, flashing into smiling ecstasies,
Come dashing through our tears—aye, laughing leap
Into our empty arms, in Fate's despite,
And nestle to our hearts. O Heaven's delight!—
The children of the childless—even *these!*

338 *My Foe*

MY Foe? You name yourself, then,—I refuse
A term so dark to designate you by.
To me you are most kind and true; and I
Am grateful as the dust is for the dews
That brim the dusk, and falter, drip and ooze
From the dear darkness of the summer sky.
Vex not yourself for lack of moan or cry
Of mine. Not any harm, nor ache nor bruise
Could reach my soul through any stroke you fain
Might launch upon me,—it were as the lance
Even of the lightning did it leap to rend
A ray of sunshine—'twould recoil again.
So, blessing you, with pitying countenance,
I wave a hand to you, my helpless friend.

339 *The Old Days*

THE old days—the far days—
The overdear and fair!—
The old days—the lost days—
How lovely they were!
The old days of Morning,
With the dew-drench on the flowers
And apple-buds and blossoms
Of those old days of ours.

Then was the *real* gold
Spendthrift Summer flung;
Then was the *real* song
Bird or Poet sung!

There was never censure then,—
  Only honest praise—
And all things were worthy of it
  In the old days.

There bide the true friends—
  The first and the best;
There clings the green grass
  Close where they rest:
Would they were here? No;—
  Would we were there! . . .
The old days—the lost days—
  How lovely they were!

340 *Lincoln—The Boy*

O SIMPLE as the rhymes that tell
  The simplest tales of youth,
Or simple as a miracle
  Beside the simplest truth—
So simple seems the view we share
  With our Immortals, sheer
From Glory looking down to where
  They were as children here.

Or thus we know, nor doubt it not,
  The boy he must have been
Whose budding heart bloomed with the thought
  All men are kith and kin—

With love-light in his eyes and shade
Of prescient tears:—Because
Only of such a boy were made
The loving man he was.

341 *You May Not Remember*

In the deep grave's charméd chamber,
Lying tranced in breathless slumber,
You may haply not remember.

YOU may not remember whether
It was Spring or Summer weather;
But *I* know—we two together
At the dim end of the day—
How the fireflies in the twilight
Drifted by like flakes of starlight,
Till o'er floods of flashing moonlight
They were wave-like swept away.

You may not remember any
Word of mine of all the many
Poured out for you there, though then a
Soul inspiréd spake my love;—
But *I* knew—and still review it,
All my passion, as with awe it
Welled in speech as from a poet
Gifted of the gods above.

Sleeping here, this hour I grieve in,
You may not remember even
Any kiss I still believe in,
Or caress of ecstasy,—
May not even *dream*—O can't you?—
That I kneel here—weep here—want you—
Feign me in your grave, to haunt you,
Since you come not back to me!

Vain! ah, vain is all my yearning
As the West's last embers burning
Into ashes, slowly turning
Ever to a denser gray!—
While the fireflies in the twilight
Drift about like flakes of starlight,
Till o'er wastes of wannest moonlight
They are wave-like swept away.

342 *The Used-To-Be*

BEYOND the purple, hazy trees
Of summer's utmost boundaries;
Beyond the sands—beyond the seas—
Beyond the range of eyes like these,
And only in the reach of the
Enraptured gaze of Memory,
There lies a land, long lost to me,—
The land of Used-to-be!

A land enchanted—such as swung
In golden seas when sirens clung
Along their dripping brinks, and sung
To Jason in that mystic tongue
That dazed men with its melody—
O such a land, with such a sea
Kissing its shores eternally,
Is the fair Used-to-be.

A land where music ever girds
The air with belts of singing-birds,
And sows all sounds with such sweet words,
That even in the low of herds
A meaning lives so sweet to me,
Lost laughter ripples limpidly
From lips brimmed over with the glee
Of rare old Used-to-be.

Lost laughter, and the whistled tunes
Of boyhood's mouth of crescent runes,
That rounded, through long afternoons,
To serenading plenilunes—
  When starlight fell so mistily
  That, peering up from bended knee,
  I dreamed 'twas bridal drapery
    Snowed over Used-to-be.

O land of love and dreamy thoughts,
And shining fields, and shady spots
Of coolest, greenest grassy plots,
Embossed with wild forget-me-nots!—
  And all ye blooms that longingly
  Lift your fair faces up to me
  Out of the past, I kiss in ye
    The lips of Used-to-be.

343 *Song of the Bullet*

IT whizzed and whistled along the blurred
  And red-blent ranks; and it nicked the star
Of an epaulet, as it snarled the word—
                War!

On it sped—and the lifted wrist
  Of the ensign-bearer stung, and straight
Dropped at his side as the word was hissed—
                Hate!

On went the missile—smoothed the blue
Of a jaunty cap and the curls thereof,
Cooing, soft as a dove might do—
Love!

Sang!—sang on!—sang hate—sang war—
Sang love, in sooth, till it needs must cease,
Hushed in the heart it was questing for.—
Peace!

344 *Dead, My Lords*

DEAD, my lords and gentlemen!—
Stilled the tongue, and stayed the pen;
Cheek unflushed and eye unlit—
Done with life, and glad of it.

Curb your praises now as then:
Dead, my lords and gentlemen.—
What he wrought found its reward
In the tolerance of the Lord.

Ye who fain had barred his path,
Dread ye now this look he hath?—
Dead, my lords and gentlemen—
Dare ye not smile back again?

Low he lies, yet high and great
Looms he, lying thus in state.—
How exalted o'er ye when
Dead, my lords and gentlemen!

345 *Bereaved*

LET me come in where you sit weeping,—ay,
Let me, who have not any child to die,
Weep with you for the little one whose love
I have known nothing of.

The little arms that slowly, slowly loosed
Their pressure round your neck; the hands you used
To kiss.—Such arms—such hands I never knew.
May I not weep with you?

Fain would I be of service—say some thing,
Between the tears, that would be comforting,—
But ah! so sadder than yourselves am I,
Who have no child to die.

346 *A Vision of Summer*

'TWAS a marvelous vision of Summer.—
That morning the dawn was late,
And came, like a long dream-ridden guest,
Through the gold of the Eastern gate.

Languid it came, and halting,
As one that yawned, half roused,
With lifted arms and indolent lids
And eyes that drowsed and drowsed.

A glimmering haze hung over
The face of the smiling air;
And the green of the trees and the blue of the leas
And the skies gleamed everywhere.

And the dewdrops' dazzling jewels,
In garlands and diadems,
Lightened and twinkled and glanced and shot
As the glints of a thousand gems:

Emeralds of dew on the grasses;
The rose with rubies set;
On the lily, diamonds; and amethysts
Pale on the violet.

And there were the pinks of the fuchsias
And the peony's crimson hue,
The lavender of the hollyhocks,
And the morning-glory's blue:

The purple of the pansy bloom,
And the passionate flush of the face
Of the velvet-rose; and the thick perfume
Of the locust every place.

The air and the sun and the shadows
Were wedded and made as one;
And the winds ran over the meadows
As little children run:

And the winds poured over the meadows
And along the willowy way
The river ran, with its ripples shod
With the sunshine of the day:

O the winds flowed over the meadows
In a tide of eddies and calms,

And the bared brow felt the touch of it
  As a sweetheart's tender palms.

And the lark went palpitating
  Up through the glorious skies,
His song spilled down from the blue profound
  As a song from Paradise.

And here was the loitering current—
  Stayed by a drift of sedge
And sodden logs—scummed thick with the gold
  Of the pollen from edge to edge.

The cat-bird piped in the hazel,
  And the harsh kingfisher screamed;
And the crane, in amber and oozy swirls,
  Dozed in the reeds and dreamed.

And in through the tumbled driftage
  And the tangled roots below,
The waters warbled and gurgled and lisped
  Like the lips of long ago.

And the senses caught, through the music,
  Twinkles of dabbling feet,
And glimpses of faces in coverts green,
  And voices faint and sweet.

And back from the lands enchanted,
  Where my earliest mirth was born,
The trill of a laugh was blown to me
  Like the blare of an elfin horn.

Again I romped through the clover;
And again I lay supine
On grassy swards, where the skies, like eyes,
Looked lovingly back in mine.

And over my vision floated
Misty illusive things—
Trailing strands of the gossamer
On heavenward wanderings:

Figures that veered and wavered,
Luring the sight, and then
Glancing away into nothingness,
And blinked into shape again.

From out far depths of the forest,
Ineffably sad and lorn,
Like the yearning cry of a long-lost love,
The moan of the dove was borne.

And through lush glooms of the thicket
The flash of the redbird's wings
On branches of star-white blooms that shook
And thrilled with its twitterings.

Through mossy and viny vistas,
Soaked ever with deepest shade,
Dimly the dull owl stared and stared
From his bosky ambuscade.

And up through the rifted tree-tops
That signaled the wayward breeze,

I saw the hulk of the hawk becalmed
  Far out on the azure seas.

Then sudden an awe fell on me,
  As the hush of the golden day
Rounded to noon, as a May to June
  That a lover has dreamed away.

And I heard, in the breathless silence,
  And the full, glad light of the sun,
The tinkle and drip of a timorous shower—
  Ceasing as it begun.

And my thoughts, like the leaves and grasses,
  In a rapture of joy and pain,
Seemed fondled and petted and beat upon
  With a tremulous patter of rain.

347 *From a Balloon*

HO! we are loose. Hear how they shout,
  And how their clamor dwindles out
Beneath us to the merest hum
Of earthly acclamation. Come,
Lean with me here and look below—
Why, bless you, man! don't tremble so!
There is no need of fear up here—
Not higher than the buzzard swings
About upon the atmosphere,
With drowsy eyes and open wings!

There, steady, now, and feast your eyes;—
See, we are tranced—we do not rise;
It is the earth that sinks from us:
But when I first beheld it thus,
And felt the breezes downward flow,
And heard all noises fail and die,
Until but silence and the sky
Above, around me, and below,—
Why, like you now, I swooned almost,
With mingled awe and fear and glee—
As giddy as an hour-old ghost
That stares into eternity.

348 *Dead Selves*

HOW many of my selves are dead?
The ghosts of many haunt me: Lo,
The baby in the tiny bed
With rockers on, is blanketed
And sleeping in the long ago;
And so I ask, with shaking head,
How many of my selves are dead?

A little face with drowsy eyes
And lisping lips comes mistily
From out the faded past, and tries
The prayers a mother breathed with sighs
Of anxious care in teaching me;
But face and form and prayers have fled—
How many of my selves are dead?

The little naked feet that slipped
In truant paths, and led the way
Through dead'ning pasture-lands, and tripped
O'er tangled poison-vines, and dipped
In streams forbidden—where are they?
In vain I listen for their tread—
How many of my selves are dead?

The awkward boy the teacher caught
Inditing letters filled with love,
Who was compelled, for all he fought,
To read aloud each tender thought
Of "Sugar Lump" and "Turtle Dove." . .
I wonder where he hides his head—
How many of my selves are dead?

The earnest features of a youth
With manly fringe on lip and chin,
With eager tongue to tell the truth,
To offer love and life, forsooth,
So brave was he to woo and win;
A prouder man was never wed—
How many of my selves are dead?

The great, strong hands so all-inclined
To welcome toil, or smooth the care
From mother-brows, or quick to find
A leisure-scrap of any kind,
To toss the baby in the air,
Or clap at babbling things it said—
How many of my selves are dead?

The pact of brawn and scheming brain—
Conspiring in the plots of wealth,
Still delving, till the lengthened chain,
Unwindlassed in the mines of gain,
Recoils with dregs of ruined health
And pain and poverty instead—
How many of my selves are dead?

The faltering step, the faded hair—
Head, heart and soul, all echoing
With maundering fancies that declare
That life and love were never there,
Nor ever joy in anything,
Nor wounded heart that ever bled—
How many of my selves are dead?

So many of my selves are dead,
That, bending here above the brink
Of my last grave, with dizzy head,
I find my spirit comforted,
For all the idle things I think:
It can but be a peaceful bed,
Since all my other selves are dead.

349

Someday

SOMEDAY:—So many tearful eyes
Are watching for thy dawning light;
So many faces toward the skies
Are weary of the night!

So many failing prayers that reel
  And stagger upward through the storm,
And yearning hands that reach and feel
  No pressure true and warm.

So many hearts whose crimson wine
  Is wasted to a purple stain
And blurred and streaked with drops of brine
  Upon the lips of Pain.

Oh, come to them!—these weary ones!
  Or if thou still must bide a while,
Make stronger yet the hope that runs
  Before thy coming smile;

And haste and find them where they wait—
  Let summer winds blow down that way,
And all they long for, soon or late,
  Bring round to them, Someday.

350 *One Afternoon*

BELOW, cool grasses: over us
The maples waver tremulous.

A slender overture above,
Low breathing as a sigh of love

At first, then gradually strong
And stronger: 'tis the locust's song,

Swoln midway to a pæan of glee,
And lost in silence dwindlingly.

Not utter silence; nay, for hid
In ghosts of it, the katydid

Chirrs a diluted echo of
The loveless song he makes us love.

The low boughs are drugged heavily
With shade; the poem you read to me

Is not more gracious than the trill
Of birds that twitter as they will.

Half consciously, with upturned eyes,
I hear your voice—I see the skies,

Where, o'er bright rifts, the swallows glance
Like glad thoughts o'er a countenance;

And voices near and far are blent
Like sweet chords of some instrument

Awakened by the trembling touch
Of hands that love it overmuch.

Dear heart, let be the book awhile!
I want your face—I want your smile!

Tell me how gladder now are they
Who look on us from heaven to-day.

351 Old Chums

"IF I die first," my old chum paused to say,
"Mind! not a whimper of regret;—instead,
Laugh and be glad, as I shall.—Being dead,
I shall not lodge so very far away
But that our mirth shall mingle.—So, the day
The word comes, joy with me." "I'll try," I said,
Though, even speaking, sighed and shook my head
And turned, with misted eyes. His roundelay
Rang gaily on the stair; and then the door
Opened and—closed. . . . Yet something of the clear,
Hale hope, and force of wholesome faith he had,
Abided with me—strengthened more and more.—
Then—then they brought his broken body here:
And I laughed—whisperingly—and we were glad.

352 What a Dead Man Said

HEAR what a dead man said to me.
His lips moved not, and the eyelids lay
Shut as the leaves of a white rose may
Ere the wan bud blooms out perfectly;
And the lifeless hands they were stiffly crossed
As they always cross them over the breast
When the soul goes nude and the corpse is dressed;
And over the form, in its long sleep lost,
From forehead down to the pointed feet
That peaked the foot of the winding-sheet,
Pallid patience and perfect rest.—

It was the voice of a dream, may be,
But it seemed that the dead man said to me:
"I, indeed, am the man that died
Yesternight—and you weep for this;
But, lo, I am with you, side by side,
As we have walked when the summer sun
Made the smiles of our faces one
And touched our lips with the same warm kiss.
Do not doubt that I tell you true—
I am the man you once called friend,
And caught my hand when I came to you,
And loosed it only because the end
Of the path I walked of a sudden stopped—
And a dead man's hand must needs be dropped—
And I—though it's strange to think so now—
I have wept, as you weep for me,
And pressed hot palms to my aching brow
And moaned through the long night ceaselessly.
Yet have I lived to forget my pain,
As you will live to be glad again—
Though never so glad as this hour am I,
Tasting a rapture of delight
Vast as the heavens are infinite,
And dear as the hour I came to die.
Living and loving, I dreamed my cup
Brimmed sometimes, and with marvelings
I have lifted and tipped it up
And drunk to the dregs of all sweet things.
Living, 'twas but a *dream* of bliss—
Now I *realize* all it is;
And now my only shadow of grief
Is that I may not give relief

Unto those living and dreaming on,
And woo them graveward, as I have gone,
And show death's loveliness,—for they
Shudder and shrink as they walk this way,
Never dreaming that all they dread
Is their purest delight when dead."

Thus it was, or it seemed to be,
That the voice of the dead man spoke to me.

353 *The Poet of the Future*

O THE Poet of the Future! He will come to us as comes
The beauty of the bugle's voice above the roar of drums—
The beauty of the bugle's voice above the roar and din
Of battle-drums that pulse the time the victor marches in.
His hands will hold no harp, in sooth; his lifted brow will bear
No coronet of laurel—nay, nor symbol anywhere,
Save that his palms are brothers to the toiler's at the plow,
His face to heaven, and the dew of duty on his brow.

He will sing across the meadow,—and the woman at the well
Will stay the dripping bucket, with a smile ineffable;
And the children in the orchard will gaze wistfully the way
The happy song comes to them, with the fragrance of the hay;

The barn will neigh in answer, and the pasture-lands behind
Will chime with bells, and send responsive lowings down
the wind;
And all the echoes of the wood will jubilantly call
In sweetest mimicry of that one sweetest voice of all.

O the Poet of the Future! He will come as man to man,
With the honest arm of labor, and the honest face of tan,
The honest heart of lowliness, the honest soul of love
For human-kind and nature-kind about him and above.
His hands will hold no harp, in sooth; his lifted brow will
bear
No coronet of laurel—nay, nor symbol anywhere,
Save that his palms are brothers to the toiler's at the plow,
His face to heaven, and the dew of duty on his brow.

354 *A Sea-Song From the Shore*

HAIL! Ho!
Sail! Ho!
Ahoy! Ahoy! Ahoy!
Who calls to me,
So far at sea?
Only a little boy!

Sail! Ho!
Hail! Ho!
The sailor he sails the sea:
I wish he would capture
A little sea-horse
And send him home to me.

I wish, as he sails
Through the tropical gales,
He would catch me a sea-bird, too,
With its silver wings
And the song it sings,
And its breast of down and dew!

I wish he would catch me a
Little mermaid,
Some island where he lands,
With her dripping curls,
And her crown of pearls,
And the looking-glass in her hands!

Hail! Ho!
Sail! Ho!
Sail far o'er the fabulous main!
And if I were a sailor
I'd sail with you,
Though I never sailed back again.

355 *A Song of the Cruise*

O THE sun and the rain, and the rain and the sun!
There'll be sunshine again when the tempest is done;
And the storm will beat back when the shining is past—
But in some happy haven we'll anchor at last.
Then murmur no more,
In lull or in roar,
But smile and be brave till the voyage is o'er.

O the rain and the sun, and the sun and the rain!
When the tempest is done, then the sunshine again;
And in rapture we'll ride through the stormiest gales,
For God's hand 's on the helm and His breath in the sails.
Then murmur no more,
In lull or in roar,
But smile and be brave till the voyage is o'er.

356 *In Swimming-Time*

CLOUDS above, as white as wool,
Drifting over skies as blue
As the eyes of beautiful
Children when they smile at you;
Groves of maple, elm, and beech,
With the sunshine sifted through
Branches, mingling each with each,
Dim with shade and bright with dew;
Stripling trees, and poplars hoar,
Hickory and sycamore,
And the drowsy dogwood bowed
Where the ripples laugh aloud,
And the crooning creek is stirred
To a gaiety that now
Mates the warble of the bird
Teetering on the hazel-bough.
Grasses long and fine and fair
As your school-boy sweetheart's hair,
Backward roached and twirled and twined
By the fingers of the wind.

Vines and mosses, interlinked
  Down dark aisles and deep ravines,
Where the stream runs, willow-brinked,
  Round a bend where some one leans
Faint and vague and indistinct
  As the like reflected thing
  In the current shimmering.
Childish voices farther on,
Where the truant stream has gone
Vex the echoes of the wood
Till no word is understood,
Save that one is well aware
Happiness is hiding there.
There, in leafy coverts, nude
  Little bodies poise and leap,
Spattering the solitude
And the silence everywhere—
  Mimic monsters of the deep!
Wallowing in sandy shoals—
  Plunging headlong out of sight;
  And, with spurtings of delight,
Clutching hands, and slippery soles,
  Climbing up the treacherous steep
Over which the spring-board spurns
Each again as he returns.
  Ah! the glorious carnival!
    Purple lips and chattering teeth—
    Eyes that burn—but, in beneath,
  Every care beyond recall,
    Every task forgotten quite—
    And again, in dreams at night,
  Dropping, drifting through it all!

357 *"The Little Man in the Tin-shop"*

WHEN I was a little boy, long ago,
And spoke of the theatre as the "show,"
The first one that I went to see,
Mother's brother it was took me—
(My uncle, of course, though he seemed to be
Only a boy—I loved him so!)
And ah, how pleasant he made it all!
And the things he knew that *I* should know!—
The stage, the "drop," and the frescoed wall;
The sudden flash of the lights; and oh,
The orchestra, with its melody,
And the lilt and jingle and jubilee
Of "The Little Man in the Tin-shop!"

For Uncle showed me the "Leader" there,
With his pale, bleak forehead and long, black hair;
Showed me the "Second," and "'Cello," and "Bass,"
And the "B-Flat," pouting and puffing his face
At the little end of the horn he blew
Silvery bubbles of music through;
And he coined me names of them, each in turn,
Some comical name that I laughed to learn,
Clean on down to the last and best,—
The lively little man, never at rest,
Who hides away at the end of the string,
And tinkers and plays on everything,—
That's "The Little Man in the Tin-shop!"

Raking a drum like a rattle of hail,
Clinking a cymbal or castanet;

Chirping a twitter or sending a wail
Through a piccolo that thrills me yet;
Reeling ripples of riotous bells,
And tipsy tinkles of triangles—
Wrangled and tangled in skeins of sound
Till it seemed that my very soul spun round,
As I leaned, in a breathless joy, toward my
Radiant uncle, who snapped his eye
And said, with the courtliest wave of his hand,
"Why, that little master of all the band
Is The Little Man in the Tin-shop!

"And I've heard Verdi, the Wonderful,
And Paganini, and Ole Bull,
Mozart, Handel, and Mendelssohn,
And fair Parepa, whose matchless tone
Karl, her master, with magic bow,
Blent with the angels', and held her so
Tranced till the rapturous Infinite—
And I've heard arias, faint and low,
From many an operatic light
Glimmering on my swimming sight
Dimmer and dimmer, until, at last,
I still sit, holding my roses fast
For The Little Man in the Tin-shop."

Oho! my Little Man, joy to you—
And *yours*—and *theirs*—your lifetime through!
Though *I've* heard melodies, boy and man,
Since first the "show" of my life began,

Never yet have I listened to
Sadder, madder, or gladder glees
Than your unharmonied harmonies;
For yours is the music that appeals
To all the fervor the boy's heart feels—
All his glories, his wildest cheers,
His bravest hopes, and his brightest tears;
And so, with his first bouquet, he kneels
To "The Little Man in the Tin-shop."

358

Little Marjorie

"WHERE is little Marjorie?"
There's the robin in the tree,
With his gallant call once more
From the boughs above the door!
There's the bluebird's note, and there
Are Spring-voices everywhere
Calling, calling ceaselessly—
"Where is little Marjorie?"

And her old playmate, the rain,
Calling at the window-pane
In soft syllables that win
Not her answer from within—
"Where is little Marjorie?"—
Or is it the rain, ah me!
Or wild gusts of tears that were
Calling us—not calling her!

"Where is little Marjorie?"
Oh, in high security
She is hidden from the reach
Of all voices that beseech:
She is where no troubled word,
Sob or sigh is ever heard,
Since God whispered tenderly—
"Where is little Marjorie?"

359

To a Skull

TURN your face this way;
I'm not weary of it—
Every hour of every day
More and more I love it—
Grinning in that jolly guise
Of bare bones and empty eyes!

Was this hollow dome,
Where I tap my finger,
Once the spirit's narrow home—
Where you loved to linger,
Hiding, as to-day are we,
From the selfsame destiny?

O'er and o'er again
Have I put the query—
Was existence so in vain
That you look so cheery?—
Death of such a benefit
That you smile, possessing it?

Did your throbbing brow
  Tire of all the flutter
Of such fancyings as now
  You, at last, may utter
In that grin so grimly bland
Only death can understand?

Has the shallow glee
  Of old dreams of pleasure
Left you ever wholly free
  To float out, at leisure,
O'er the shoreless, trackless trance
Of unsounded circumstance?

Only this I read
  In your changeless features,—
You, at least, have gained a meed
  Held from living creatures:
You have naught to ask.—Beside,
You do grin so satisfied!

360

The All-Kind Mother

LO, whatever is at hand
  Is full meet for the demand:
Nature ofttimes giveth best
When she seemeth chariest.
She hath shapen shower and sun
To the need of every one—
Summer bland and winter drear,
Dimpled pool and frozen mere.

All thou lackest she hath still
Near thy finding and thy fill.
Yield her fullest faith, and she
Will endow thee royally.

Loveless weed and lily fair
She attendeth, here and there—
Kindly to the weed as to
The lorn lily teared with dew.
Each to her hath use as dear
As the other; an thou clear
Thy cloyed senses thou may'st see
Haply all the mystery.
Thou shalt see the lily get
Its divinest blossom; yet
Shall the weed's tip bloom no less
With the song-bird's gleefulness.

Thou art poor, or thou art rich—
Never lightest matter which;
All the glad gold of the noon,
All the silver of the moon,
She doth lavish on thee, while
Thou withholdest any smile
Of thy gratitude to her,
Baser used than usurer.
Shame be on thee an thou seek
Not her pardon, with hot cheek,
And bowed head, and brimming eyes,
At her merciful "Arise."

361 *Your Violin*

YOUR violin! Ah me!
'Twas fashioned o'er the sea,
In storied Italy—
What matter where?
It is its voice that sways
And thrills me as it plays
The airs of other days—
The days that were!

Then let your magic bow
Glide lightly to and fro.—
I close my eyes, and so,
In vast content,
I kiss my hand to you,
And to the tunes we knew
Of old, as well as to
Your instrument!

Poured out of some dim dream
Of lulling sounds that seem
Like ripples of a stream
Twanged lightly by
The slender, tender hands
Of weeping-willow wands
That droop where gleaming sands
And pebbles lie. . . .

A melody that swoons
In all the truant tunes
Long listless afternoons
Lure from the breeze,

When woodland boughs are stirred,
And moaning doves are heard,
And laughter afterward
  Beneath the trees.

Through all the chorusing,
I hear on leaves of Spring
The drip and pattering
  Of April skies,
With echoes faint and sweet
As baby-angel feet
Might wake along a street
  Of Paradise.

362

The Dead Wife

ALWAYS I see her in a saintly guise
  Of lilied raiment, white as her own brow
When first I kissed the tear-drops to the eyes
  That smile forever now.

Those gentle eyes! They seem the same to me,
  As, looking through the warm dews of mine own,
I see them gazing downward patiently
  Where, lost and all alone

In the great emptiness of night, I bow
  And sob aloud for one returning touch
Of the dear hands that, Heaven having now,
  I need so much—so much!

363 *Give Me the Baby*

GIVE me the baby to hold, my dear—
To hold and hug, and to love and kiss.
Ah! he will come to me, never a fear—
Come to the nest of a breast like this,
As warm for him as his face with cheer.
Give me the baby to hold, my dear!

Trustfully yield him to my caress.
"Bother," you say? What! a "bother" to *me?*—
To fill up my soul with such happiness
As the love of a baby that laughs to be
Snuggled away where my heart can hear!
Give me the baby to hold, my dear!

Ah, but his hands are grimed, you say,
And would soil my laces and clutch my hair.—
Well, what would pleasure me more, I pray,
Than the touch and tug of the wee hands there?—
The wee hands there, and the warm face here—
Give me the baby to hold, my dear!

Give me the baby! (Oh, won't you see?
. . . Somewhere, out where the green of the lawn
Is turning to gray, and the maple-tree
Is weeping its leaves of gold upon
A little mound, with a dead rose near. . . .)
Give me the baby to hold, my dear!

THE BOOK OF JOYOUS CHILDREN

364 *The Little Lady*

O THE Little Lady 's dainty
As the picture in a book,
And her hands are creamy-whiter
Than the water-lilies look;
Her laugh 's the undrown'd music
Of the maddest meadow-brook.—
Yet all in vain I praise The Little Lady!

Her eyes are blue and dewy
As the glimmering Summer-dawn,—
Her face is like the eglantine
Before the dew is gone;
And were that honied mouth of hers
A bee's to feast upon,
He 'd be a bee bewildered, Little Lady!

Her brow makes light look sallow;
And the sunshine, I declare,
Is but a yellow jealousy
Awakened by her hair—
For O, the dazzling glint of it
Nor sight nor soul can bear,—
So Love goes groping for The Little Lady.

And yet she 's neither Nymph nor Fay,
  Nor yet of Angelkind:—
She 's but a racing school-girl, with
  Her hair blown out behind
And tremblingly unbraided by
  The fingers of the Wind,
As it wildly swoops upon The Little Lady.

365 *The Boy Patriot*

I WANT to be a Soldier!—
A Soldier!—
A Soldier!—
I want to be a Soldier, with a sabre in my hand
Or a little carbine rifle, or a musket on my shoulder,
Or just a snare-drum, snarling in the middle of the band;
I want to hear, high overhead, The Old Flag flap her wings
While all the Army, following, in chorus cheers and sings;
I want to hear the tramp and jar
  Of patriots a million,
As gayly dancing off to war
  As dancing a cotillion.

I want to be a Soldier!—
A Soldier!—
A Soldier!—
I want to be a Soldier, with a sabre in my hand
Or a little carbine rifle, or a musket on my shoulder,
Or just a snare-drum, snarling in the middle of the band.

I want to see the battle!—
The battle!—
The battle!—
I want to see the battle, and be in it to the end;—
I want to hear the cannon clear their throats and catch the prattle
Of all the pretty compliments the enemy can send!—
And then I know my wits will go,—and where I *should n't* be—
Well, there's the spot, in any fight, that you may search for me.
So, when our foes have had their fill,
Though I'm among the dying,
To see The Old Flag flying still,
I'll laugh to leave her flying!

I want to be a Soldier!—
A Soldier!—
A Soldier!—
I want to be a Soldier, with a sabre in my hand
Or a little carbine rifle, or a musket on my shoulder,
Or just a snare-drum, snarling in the middle of the band.

366 *No Boy Knows*

THERE are many things that boys may know—
Why this and that are thus and so,—
Who made the world in the dark and lit
The great sun up to lighten it:

Boys know new things every day—
When they study, or when they play,—
When they idle, or sow and reap—
But no boy knows when he goes to sleep.

Boys who listen—or should, at least,—
May know that the round old earth rolls East;—
And know that the ice and the snow and the rain—
Ever repeating their parts again—
Are all just water the sunbeams first
Sip from the earth in their endless thirst,
And pour again till the low streams leap.—
But no boy knows when he goes to sleep.

A boy may know what a long, glad while
It has been to him since the dawn's first smile,
When forth he fared in the realm divine
Of brook-laced woodland and spun-sunshine;—
He may know each call of his truant mates,
And the paths they went,—and the pasture-gates
Of the 'cross-lots home through the dusk so deep.—
But no boy knows when he goes to sleep.

O I have followed me, o'er and o'er,
From the flagrant drowse on the parlor-floor,
To the pleading voice of the mother when
I even doubted I heard it then—
To the sense of a kiss, and a moonlit room,
And dewy odors of locust-bloom—
A sweet white cot—and a cricket's cheep.—
But no boy knows when he goes to sleep.

367 *A Masque of the Seasons*

SCENE—*A kitchen.—Group of Children, popping corn.—The Fairy Queen of the Seasons discovered in the smoke of the corn-popper.—Waving her wand, and, with curt, sharp, imperious ejaculations, addressing the bespelled auditors, who neither see nor hear her nor suspect her presence.*

QUEEN

Summer or Winter or Spring or Fall,—
Which do you like the best of all?

LITTLE JASPER

When I'm dressed warm as warm can be,
And with boots, to go
Through the deepest snow,
Winter-time is the time for me!

QUEEN

Summer or Winter or Spring or Fall,—
Which do you like the best of all?

LITTLE MILDRED

I like blossoms, and birds that sing;
The grass and the dew,
And the sunshine, too,—
So, best of all I like the Spring.

QUEEN

Summer or Winter or Spring or Fall,—
Which do you like the best of all?

LITTLE MANDEVILLE

O little friends, I most rejoice
When I hear the drums
As the Circus comes,—
So Summer-time's my special choice.

QUEEN

Summer or Winter or Spring or Fall,—
Which do you like the best of all?

LITTLE EDITH

Apples of ruby, and pears of gold,
And grapes of blue
That the bee stings through.—
Fall—it is all that my heart can hold!

QUEEN

Soh! my lovelings and pretty dears,
You've *each* a favorite, it appears,—
Summer and Winter and Spring and Fall.—
That's the reason I send them *all!*

SONG

[W. S.]

WITH a hey! and a hi! and a hey-ho rhyme!
O the shepherd lad
He is ne'er so glad
As when he pipes, in the blossom-time,
So rare!
While Kate picks by, yet looks not there.
So rare! so rare!
With a hey! and a hi! and a ho!
The grasses curdle where the daisies blow!

With a hey! and a hi! and a hey-ho vow!
Then he sips her face
At the sweetest place—
And ho! how white is the hawthorn now!—
So rare!—
And the daisied world rocks round them there.
So rare! so rare!
With a hey! and a hi! and a ho!
The grasses curdle where the daisies blow!

TO THE CHILD JULIA

[R. H.]

LITTLE Julia, since that we
May not as our elders be,
Let us blithely fill the days
Of our youth with pleasant plays.

First we 'll up at earliest dawn,
While as yet the dew is on
The sooth'd grasses and the pied
Blossomings of morningtide;
Next, with rinsèd cheeks that shine
As the enamell'd eglantine,
We will break our fast on bread
With both cream and honey spread;

Then, with many a challenge-call,
We will romp from house and hall,
Gypsying with the birds and bees
Of the green-tress'd garden trees.
In a bower of leaf and vine
Thou shalt be a lady fine
Held in duréss by the great
Giant I shall personate.
Next, when many mimics more
Like to these we have played o'er,
We 'll betake us home-along
Hand in hand at evensong.

THE DOLLY'S MOTHER

[W. W.]

A LITTLE maid, of summers four—
Did you compute her years,—
And yet how infinitely more
To me her age appears:

I mark the sweet child's serious air,
  At her unplayful play,—
The tiny doll she mothers there
  And lulls to sleep away,

Grows—'neath the grave similitude—
  An infant real, to me,
And *she* a saint of motherhood
  In hale maturity.

So, pausing in my lonely round,
  And all unseen of her,
I stand uncovered—her profound
  And abject worshipper.

WIND OF THE SEA

[A. T.]

WIND of the Sea, come fill my sail—
  Lend me the breath of a freshening gale
And bear my port-worn ship away!
For O the greed of the tedious town—
The shutters up and the shutters down!
  Wind of the Sea, sweep over the bay
    And bear me away!—away!

Whither you bear me, Wind of the Sea,
Matters never the least to me:
  Give me your fogs, with the sails adrip,

Or the weltering path thro' the starless night—
On, somewhere, is a new daylight
And the cheery glint of another ship
As its colors dip and dip!

Wind of the Sea, sweep over the bay
And bear me away!—away!

BORN TO THE PURPLE

[W. M.]

MOST-LIKE it was this kingly lad
Spake out of the pure joy he had
In his child-heart of the wee maid
Whose eerie beauty sudden laid
A spell upon him, and his words
Burst as a song of any bird's:—

A peerless Princess thou shalt be,
Through wit of love's rare sorcery:
To crown the crown of thy gold hair
Thou shalt have rubies, bleeding there
Their crimson splendor midst the marred
Pulp of great pearls, and afterward
Leaking in fainter ruddy stains
Adown thy neck-and-armlet-chains
Of turquoise, chrysoprase, and mad
Light-frenzied diamonds, dartling glad
Swift spirts of shine that interfuse
As though with lucent crystal dews

That glance and glitter like split rays
Of sunshine, born of burgeoning Mays
When the first bee tilts down the lip
Of the first blossom, and the drip
Of blended dew and honey heaves
Him blinded midst the underleaves.
For raiment, Fays shall weave for thee—
Out of the phosphor of the sea
And the frayed floss of starlight, spun
With counterwarp of the firm sun—
A vesture of such filmy sheen
As, through all ages, never queen
Therewith strove truly to make less
One fair line of her loveliness.
Thus gowned and crowned with gems and gold,
Thou shalt, through centuries untold,
Rule, ever young and ever fair,
As now thou rulest, smiling there.

SUBTLETY

[R. B.]

WHILST little Paul, convalescing, was staying
Close indoors, and his boisterous classmates paying
Him visits, with fresh school-notes and surprises—
With nettling pride they sprung the word "Athletic,"
With much advice and urgings sympathetic
Anent "athletic exercises." Wise as
Lad might look, quoth Paul: "I've pondered o'er that
'Athletic,' but I mean to take, before that,
Downstairic and outdooric exercises."

369 *The Treasure of the Wise Man*

O THE night was dark and the night was late,
And the robbers came to rob him;
And they picked the locks of his palace-gate,
The robbers that came to rob him—
They picked the locks of his palace-gate,
Seized his jewels and gems of state,
His coffers of gold and his priceless plate,—
The robbers that came to rob him.

But loud laughed he in the morning red!—
For of what had the robbers robbed him?—
Ho! hidden safe, as he slept in bed,
When the robbers came to rob him,—
They robbed him not of a golden shred
Of the childish dreams in his wise old head—
"And they're welcome to all things else," he said,
When the robbers came to rob him.

370 *Evensong*

LAY away the story,—
Though the theme is sweet,
There 's a lack of something yet,
Leaves it incomplete:—
There 's a nameless yearning—
Strangely undefined—
For a story sweeter still
Than the written kind.

Therefore read no longer—
I 've no heart to hear
But just something you make up,
O my mother dear.—
With your arms around me,
Hold me, folded-eyed,—
Only let your voice go on—
I 'll be satisfied.

371 *A Song of Singing*

SING! gangling lad, along the brink
Of wild brook-ways of shoal and deep,
Where killdees dip, and cattle drink,
And glinting little minnows leap!
Sing! slimpsy lass who trips above
And sets the foot-log quivering!
Sing! bittern, bumble-bee, and dove—
Sing! Sing! Sing!

Sing as you will, O singers all
Who sing because you *want* to sing!
Sing! peacock on the orchard wall,
Or tree-toad by the trickling spring!
Sing! every bird on every bough—
Sing! every living, loving thing—
Sing any song, and anyhow,
But Sing! Sing! Sing!

372 *The Book of Joyous Children*

BOUND and bordered in leaf-green,
Edged with trellised buds and flowers
And glad Summer-gold, with clean
White and purple morning-glories
Such as suit the songs and stories
Of this book of ours,
Unrevised in text or scene,—
The Book of Joyous Children.

Wild and breathless in their glee—
Lawless rangers of all ways
Winding through lush greenery
Of Elysian vales—the viny,
Bowery groves of shady, shiny
Haunts of childish days.
Spread and read again with me
The Book of Joyous Children.

What a whir of wings, and what
Sudden drench of dews upon
The young brows, wreathed, all unsought,
With the apple-blossom garlands
Of the poets of those far lands
Whence all dreams are drawn
Set herein and soiling not
The Book of Joyous Children.

In their blithe companionship
Taste again, these pages through,
The hot honey on your lip
Of the sun-smit wild strawberry,
Or the chill tart of the cherry;

Kneel, all glowing, to
The cool spring, and with it sip
The Book of Joyous Children.

As their laughter needs no rule,
So accept their language, pray.—
Touch it not with any tool:
Surely we may understand it,—
As the heart has parsed or scanned it
Is a worthy way,
Though found not in any School
The Book of Joyous Children.

Be a truant—know no place
Of prison under heaven's rim!
Front the Father's smiling face—
Smiling, that *you* smile the brighter
For the heavy hearts made lighter,
Since you smile with Him.
Take—and thank Him for His grace—
The Book of Joyous Children.

MISCELLANY

373 *God Bless Us Every One*

"GOD bless us every one!" prayed Tiny Tim,
Crippled and dwarfed of body, yet so tall
Of soul, we tiptoe earth to look on him,
High towering over all.

He loved the loveless world, nor dreamed indeed
That it, at best, could give to him, the while,
But pitying glances, when his only need
Was but a cheery smile.

And thus he prayed, "God bless us every one!"—
Enfolding all the creeds within the span
Of his child-heart; and so, despising none,
Was nearer saint than man.

I like to fancy God, in Paradise,
Lifting a finger o'er the rhythmic swing
Of chiming harp and song, with eager eyes
Turned earthward, listening—

The Anthem stilled—the Angels leaning there
Above the golden walls—the morning sun
Of Christmas bursting flower-like with the prayer,
"God bless us every one!"

374 *When She Comes Home*

WHEN she comes home again! A thousand ways
I fashion, to myself, the tenderness
Of my glad welcome: I shall tremble—yes;
And touch her, as when first in the old days
I touched her girlish hand, nor dared upraise
Mine eyes, such was my faint heart's sweet distress.
Then silence: and the perfume of her dress:
The room will sway a little, and a haze
Cloy eyesight—soulsight, even—for a space;
And tears—yes; and the ache here in the throat,
To know that I so ill deserve the place
Her arms make for me; and the sobbing note
I stay with kisses, ere the tearful face
Again is hidden in the old embrace.

375 *The Romaunt of King Mordameer*

HO! did ye hear of Mordameer,
The King of Slumberland!
A lotus-crown upon his brow—
A poppy in his hand,
And all the elves that people dreams
To bow at his command.

His throne is wrought of blackest night,
Enriched with rare designs
Wherein the blazing comet runs
And writhes and wreaths and twines
About a crescent angel-face
That ever smiling shines.

The dais is of woven rays
  Of starlight fringed with shade,
And jewelled o'er with gems of dew,
  And dyed and interlaid
With every gleaming tint and hue
  Of which the flowers are made.

And when the day has died away
  In darkness o'er the land,
The King bends down his dusky face
  And takes the sleeper's hand,
And lightly o'er his folded eyes
  He waves his magic wand.

And lo! within his princely home,
  Upon his downy bed,
With soft and silken coverlets
  And curtains round him spread,
The rich man rolls in troubled sleep,
  And moans in restless dread:

His eyes are closed, yet Mordameer
  May see their stony stare
As plainly fixed in agony
  As though the orbs were bare
And glaring at the wizard throng
  That fills the empty air:—

A thousand shapes, with phantom japes,
  Dance o'er the sleeper's sight,—
With fingers bony-like and lean,

And faces pinched and white,
And withered cheeks, and sunken eyes
With ever-ravening sight.

And such the dreams that Mordameer
Brings to the child of Pride,—
The worn and wasted forms that he
Hath stinted and denied—
Of those who filled his coffers up
And empty-handed died.

And then again he waves his wand:
And from his lair of straw
The felon, with his fettered limbs,
Starts up with fear and awe,
And stares with starting eyes upon
A vision of the law:

A grim procession passes by,
The while he glares in fear—
With faces, from a wanton's smile
Down to a demon's leer,—
The woman marching at the front,
The hangman at the rear.

All ways are clear to Mordameer:
The ocean knows his tread;
His feet are free on land or sea:—
Above the sailor's head
He hangs a dream of home, and bends
Above his cottage-bed:

And, nestled in the mother's arms,
A child surpassing fair,
In slumber lies, its tiny hands
Entangled in her hair,
And round its face a smile that moves
Its lips as though in prayer.

And lo! the good king feasts its eyes
With fruits from foreign shores,
And pink-lipped shells that ever mock
The ocean as it roars;
And in the mother's arms he folds
The form that she adores.

Through all the hovels of the poor
He steals with noiseless tread,
And presses kisses o'er and o'er
Where sorrow's tears are shed,
Till old caresses live once more
That are forever dead.

Above the soldier in his tent
Are glorious battles fought;
And o'er the prince's velvet couch,
And o'er the peasant's cot,
And o'er the pallet of disease
His wondrous spells are wrought.

He bends him o'er the artist's cot,
And fills his dazzled mind
With airy forms that float about

Like clouds in summer wind,
O'er landscapes that the angels wrought
And God Himself designed.

And drifting through the poet's dreams
The seraph trails her wings,
And fills the chancels of his soul
With heavenly whisperings;
Till, swooning with delight, he hears
The song he never sings.

He walks the wide world's every way,
This monarch grand and grim;
All paths that reach the human heart,
However faint and dim,
He journeys, for the darkest night
Is light as day to him.

And thus the lordly Mordameer
Rules o'er his mystic realm,
With gems from out the star's red core
To light his diadem,
And kings and emperors to kneel
And kiss his garment's hem.

For once, upon a night of dreams,
Adown the aisles of space
I strayed so far that I forgot
Mine own abiding-place,
And wandered into Slumberland,
And met him face to face.

376 *The Werewife*

SHE came to me in a dazzling guise
Of gleaming tresses and glimmering eyes,
With long, limp lashes that drooped and made
For their baleful glances bowers of shade;
And a face so white—so white and sleek
That the roses blooming in either cheek
Flamed and burned with a crimson glow
Redder than ruddiest roses blow—
Redder than blood of the roses know
That Autumn spills in the drifted snow.
And what could my fluttering, moth-winged soul
Do but hover in her control?—
With its little, bewildered bead-eyes fixed
Where the gold and the white and the crimson mixed!
And when the tune of her low laugh went
Up from that ivory instrument
That you would have called her throat, I swear
The notes built nests in her gilded hair,
And nestled and whistled and twittered there,
And wooed me and won me to my despair.
And thus it was that she lured me on,
Till the latest gasp of my love was gone,
And my soul lay dead, with a loathing face
Turned in vain from her dread embrace,—
For even its poor dead eyes could see
Her sharp teeth sheathed in the flesh of me,
And her dripping lips, as she turned to shake
The red froth off that her greed did make,
As my heart gripped hold of a deathless ache,
And the kiss of her stung like the fang of a snake.

377 *Out of the Dark and the Dearth*

HO! but the darkness was densely black!
And young feet faltered and groped their way,
With never the gleam of a star, alack!
Nor a moonbeam's lamest ray!—
Blind of light as the blind of sight.—
And that was the night—the night!

And out of the blackness, vague and vast,
And out of the dark and the dearth, behold!—
A great ripe radiance grew at last
And burst like a bubble of gold,
Gilding the way that the feet danced on.—
And that was the dawn—The Dawn!

378 *For You*

FOR you, I could forget the gay
Delirium of merriment,
And let my laughter die away
In endless silence of content.
I could forget, for your dear sake,
The utter emptiness and ache
Of every loss I ever knew.—
What could I not forget for you?

I could forget the just deserts
Of mine own sins, and so erase
The tear that burns, the smile that hurts,
And all that mars and masks my face.

For your fair sake I could forget
The bonds of life that chafe and fret,
Nor care if death were false or true.—
What could I not forget for you?

What could I not forget? Ah me!
One thing I know would still abide
Forever in my memory,
Though all of love were lost beside—
I yet would feel how first the wine
Of your sweet lips made fools of mine
Until they sung, all drunken through—
"What could I not forget for you?"

379 *Laughter*

WITHIN the cosiest corner of my dreams
He sits, high-throned above all gods that be
Portrayed in marble-cold mythology,
Since from his joyous eyes a twinkle gleams
So warm with life and light it ever seems
Spraying in mists of sunshine over me,
And mingled with such rippling ecstasy
As overleaps his lips in laughing streams.
Ho! look on him, and say if he be old
Or youthful! Hand in hand with gray old Time
He toddled when an infant; and, behold!—
He hath not aged, but to the lusty prime
Of babyhood—his brow a trifle bold—
His hair a ravelled nimbus of gray gold.

380 *The Witch of Erkmurden*

I

WHO cantereth forth in the night so late—
So late in the night, and so nigh the dawn?
'Tis The Witch of Erkmurden who leapeth the gate
Of the old churchyard where the three Sprites wait
Till the whir of her broom is gone.

And who peereth down from the belfry tall,
With the ghost-white face and the ghastly stare,
With lean hands clinched in the grated wall
Where the red vine rasps and the rank leaves fall,
And the clock-stroke drowns his prayer?

II

The wee babe wails, and the storm grows loud,
Nor deeper the dark of the night may be,
For the lightning's claw, with a great wet cloud,
Hath wiped the moon and the wild-eyed crowd
Of the stars out wrathfully.

Knuckled and kinked as the hunchback shade
Of a thorn-tree bendeth the beldam old
Over the couch where the mother-maid,
With her prayerful eyes, and the babe are laid,
Waiting the doom untold.

"Mother, O Mother, I only crave
Mercy for him and the babe—not me!"

"Hush! for it maketh my brain to rave
Of my two white shrouds, and my one wide grave,
And a mound for my children three."

"Mother, O Mother, I only pray
Pity for him who is son to thee
And more than my brother.—" "Wilt hush, I say!
Though I meet thee not at the Judgment Day,
I will bury my children three!"

"Then hark! O Mother, I hear his cry—
Hear his curse from the church-tower now,—
'Ride thou witch till thy hate shall die,
Yet hell as heaven eternally
Be sealed to such as thou!'"

An infant's wail—then a laugh, god wot,
That strangled the echoes of deepest hell;
And a thousand shuttles of lightning shot,
And the moon bulged out like a great red blot,
And a shower of blood-stars fell.

III

There is one wide grave scooped under the eaves—
Under the eaves as they weep and weep;
And, veiled by the mist that the dead storm weaves,
The hag bends low, and the earth receives
Mother and child asleep.

There's the print of the hand at either throat,
And the frothy ooze at the lips of each,
But both smile up where the new stars float,

And the moon sails out like a silver boat
  Unloosed from a stormy beach.

IV

Bright was the morn when the sexton gray
  Twirled the rope of the old church bell,—
But it answered not, and he tugged away—
And lo, at his feet a dead man lay—
  Dropped down with a single knell.

And the scared wight found, in the lean hand gripped,
  A scrip which read: "O the grave is wide,
But it empty waits, for the low eaves dripped
Their prayerful tears, and the three Sprites slipped
  Away with my babe and bride."

381 *Songs Tuneless*

I

HE kisses me! Ah, now, at last,
  He says good-night as it should be,
His great warm eyes bent yearningly
Above my face—his arms locked fast
  About me, and mine own eyes dim
  With happy tears for love of him.

He kisses me! Last night, beneath
  A swarm of stars, he said I stood
His one fair form of womanhood,

And springing, shut me in the sheath
  Of a caress that almost hid
  Me from the good his kisses did.

He kisses me! He kisses me!
  This is the sweetest song I know,
  And so I sing it very low
And faint, and O so tenderly
  That, though you listen, none but he
May hear it as he kisses me.

II

"How can I make you love me more?"—
  A thousand times she asks me this,
  Her lips uplifted with the kiss
That I have tasted o'er and o'er,
  Till now I drain it with no sense
  Other than utter indolence.

"How can I make you love me more?"—
  A thousand times her questioning face
  Has nestled in its resting-place
Unanswered, till, though I adore
  This thing of being loved, I doubt
  Not I could get along without.

"How can she make me love her more?"—
  Ah! little woman, if, indeed,
  I might be frank as is the need
Of frankness, I would fall before
  Her very feet, and there confess
  My love were more if hers were less.

III

Since I am old I have no care
To babble silly tales of when
I loved, and lied, as other men
Have done, who boasted here and there.
They would have died for the fair thing
They after murdered, marrying.

Since I am old I reason thus—
No thing survives, of all the past,
But just regret enough to last
Us till the clods have smothered us;—
Then, with our dead loves, side by side,
We may, perhaps, be satisfied.

Since I am old, and strive to blow
Alive the embers of my youth
And early loves, I find, in sooth,
An old man's heart may burn so low,
'Tis better just to calmly sit
And rake the ashes over it.

382 *Tommy Smith*

DIMPLE-CHEEKED and rosy-lipped.
With his cap-rim backward tipped,
Still in fancy I can see
Little Tommy smile on me—
Little Tommy Smith.

Little unsung Tommy Smith—
Scarce a name to rhyme it with;
Yet most tenderly to me
Something sings unceasingly—
Little Tommy Smith.

On the verge of some far land
Still forever does he stand,
With his cap-rim rakishly
Tilted; so he smiles on me—
Little Tommy Smith.

Elder-blooms contrast the grace
Of the rover's radiant face—
Whistling back, in mimicry,
"Old—Bob—White!" all liquidly—
Little Tommy Smith.

Oh, my jaunty statuette
Of first love, I see you yet,
Though you smile so mistily,
It is but through tears I see,
Little Tommy Smith.

But, with crown tipped back behind,
And the glad hand of the wind
Smoothing back your hair, I see
Heaven's best angel smile on me,—
Little Tommy Smith.

383 *Eternity*

O WHAT a weary while it is to stand,
Telling the countless ages o'er and o'er,
Till all the finger-tips held out before
Our dazzled eyes by heaven's starry hand
Drop one by one, yet at some dread command
Are held again, and counted evermore!
How feverish the music seems to pour
Along the throbbing veins of anthems grand!
And how the cherubim sing on and on—
The seraphim and angels—still in white—
Still harping—still enraptured—far withdrawn
In hovering armies tranced in endless flight!
. . . God's mercy! is there never dusk or dawn,
Or any crumb of gloom to feed upon?

384 *Death*

LO, I am dying! And to feel the King
Of Terrors fasten on me, steeps all sense
Of life, and love, and loss, and everything,
In such deep calms of restful indolence,
His keenest fangs of pain are sweet to me
As fusèd kisses of mad lovers' lips
When, flung shut-eyed in spasmed ecstasy,
They feel the world spin past them in eclipse,
And so thank God with ever-tightening lids!
But what I see, the soul of me forbids
All utterance of; and what I hear and feel,
The rattle in my throat could ill reveal

Though it were music to your ears as to
Mine own.—Press closer—closer—I have grown
So great, your puny arms about me thrown
Seem powerless to hold me here with you;—
I slip away—I waver—and—I fall—
Christ! What a plunge! Where am I dropping? All
My breath bursts into dust—I can not cry—
I whirl—I reel and veer up overhead,
And drop flat-faced against—against—the sky—
Soh, bless me! I am dead!

385

A Twintorette

HO! my little maiden
With the glossy tresses,
Come thou and dance with me
A measure all divine;
Let my breast be laden
With but thy caresses—
Come thou and glancingly
Mate thy face with mine.

Thou shalt trill a rondel,
While my lips are purling
Some dainty twitterings
Sweeter than the birds';
And, with arms that fondle
Each as we go twirling,
We will kiss, with titterings,
Lisps and loving words.

386 *Dolores*

LITHE-ARMED, and with satin-soft shoulders
As white as the cream-crested wave;
With a gaze dazing every beholder's,
She holds every gazer a slave:
Her hair, a fair haze, is outfloated
And flared in the air like a flame;
Bare-breasted, bare-browed and bare-throated—
Too smooth for the soothliest name.

She wiles you with wine, and wrings for you
Ripe juices of citron and grape;
She lifts up her lute and sings for you
Till the soul of you seeks no escape;
And you revel and reel with mad laughter,
And fall at her feet, at her beck,
And the scar of her sandal thereafter
You wear like a gyve round your neck.

387 *There Was a Cherry-Tree*

THERE was a cherry-tree. Its bloomy snows
Cool even now the fevered sight that knows
No more its airy visions of pure joy—
As when you were a boy.

There was a cherry-tree. The Bluejay set
His blue against its white—O blue as jet
He seemed there then!—But *now*—Whoever knew
He was so pale a blue!

There was a cherry-tree—Our child-eyes saw
The miracle:—Its pure white snows did thaw
Into a crimson fruitage, far too sweet
But for a boy to eat.

There was a cherry-tree, give thanks and joy!—
There was a bloom of snow—There was a boy—
There was a Bluejay of the realest blue—
And fruit for both of you.

388 *The Light of Love*

Song

THE clouds have deepened o'er the night
Till, through the dark profound,
The moon is but a stain of light,
And all the stars are drowned;
And all the stars are drowned, my love,
And all the skies are drear;
But what care we for light above,
If light of love is here?

The wind is like a wounded thing
That beats about the gloom
With baffled breast and drooping wing,
And wail of deepest doom;
And wail of deepest doom, my love;
But what have we to fear
From night, or rain, or winds above,
With love and laughter here?

389 *While the Heart Beats Young*

WHILE the heart beats young!—O the splendor of the Spring,
With all her dewy jewels on, is not so fair a thing!
The fairest, rarest morning of the blossom-time of May
Is not so sweet a season as the season of to-day
While Youth's diviner climate folds and holds us, close caressed,
As we feel our mothers with us by the touch of face and breast;—
Our bare feet in the meadows, and our fancies up among
The airy clouds of morning—while the heart beats young.

While the heart beats young and our pulses leap and dance,
With every day a holiday and life a glad romance,—
We hear the birds with wonder, and with wonder watch their flight—
Standing, still the more enchanted, both of hearing and of sight,
When they have vanished wholly,—for, in fancy, wing-to-wing
We fly to Heaven with them; and, returning, still we sing
The praises of this *lower* Heaven with tireless voice and tongue,
Even as the Master sanctions—while the heart beats young.

While the heart beats young!—While the heart beats young!
O green and gold old Earth of ours, with azure overhung

And looped with rainbows!—grant us yet this grassy lap
of thine—
We would be still thy children, through the shower and
the shine!
So pray we, lisping, whispering, in childish love and trust,
With our beseeching hands and faces lifted from the dust
By fervor of the poem, all unwritten and unsung,
Thou givest us in answer, while the heart beats young.

390 *Ere I Went Mad*

ERE I went mad—
O you may never guess what dreams I had!
Such hosts of happy things did come to me.
One time, it seemed, I knelt at some one's knee,
My wee lips threaded with a strand of prayer,
With kinks of kisses in it here and there
To stay and tangle it the while I knit
A mother's long-forgotten name in it.
Be sure, I dreamed it all, but I was glad
—Ere I went mad!

Ere I went mad,
I dreamed there came to me a fair-faced lad,
Who led me by the wrist where blossoms grew
In grassy lands, and where the skies were blue
As his own eyes. And he did lisp and sing,
And weave me wreaths where I sat marvelling
What little prince it was that crowned me queen
And caught my face so cunningly between
His dimple-dinted hands, and kept me glad
—Ere I went mad!

Ere I went mad,
Not even winter weather made me sad—
I dreamed, indeed, the skies were ne'er so dull
That *his* smile might not make them beautiful.
And now, it seemed, he had grown O so fair
And straight and strong that, when he smoothed my hair,
I felt as any lily with drooped head
That leans, in fields of grain unharvested,
By some lithe stalk of barley—pure and glad
—Ere I went mad!

Ere I went mad,
The last of all the happy dreams I had
Was of a peerless king—a conqueror—
Who crowned me with a kiss, and throned me for
One hour! Ah, God of Mercy! what a dream
To tincture life with! Yet I made no scream
As I awakened—with these eyes you see,
That may not smile till love comes back to me,
And lulls me back to those old dreams I had
—Ere I went mad.

391 *The Speeding of the King's Spite*

A KING—estranged from his loving Queen
By a foolish royal whim—
Tired and sick of the dull routine
Of matters surrounding him—
Issued a mandate in this wise:—
"The dower of my daughter's hand
I will give to him who holds this prize,
The strangest thing in the land."

But the King, sad sooth! in this grim decree
  Had a motive low and mean;—
'Twas a royal piece of chicanery,
  To harry and spite the Queen—
For King though he was, and beyond compare
  He had ruled all things save one—
Then blamed the Queen that his only heir
  Was a daughter—not a son.

The girl had grown, in the mother's care,
  Like a bud in the shine and shower
That drinks of the wine of the balmy air
  Till it blooms into matchless flower;
Her waist was the rose's stem that bore
  The flower—and the flower's perfume—
That ripens on, till it bulges o'er,
  With its wealth of bud and bloom.

And she had a lover—lowly sprung,—
  But a purer, nobler heart
Never spake in a courtlier tongue
  Or wooed with a dearer art:
And the fair pair paled at the King's decree;
  But the smiling Fates contrived
To have them wed, in a secrecy
  That the Queen *herself* connived—

While the grim King's heralds scoured the land
  And the countries round about,
Shouting aloud, at the King's command,
  A challenge to knave or lout,

Prince or peasant,—"The mighty King
  Would have ye understand
That he who shows him the strangest thing
  Shall have his daughter's hand!"

And thousands flocked to the royal throne,
  Bringing a thousand things
Strange and curious;—One, a bone—
  The hinge of a fairy's wings:
And one, the glass of a mermaid queen,
  Gemmed with a diamond dew,
Where, down in its reflex, dimly seen,
  Her face smiled out at you.

One brought a cluster of some strange date,
  With a subtle and searching tang
That seemed, as you tasted, to penetrate
  The heart like a serpent's fang;
And back you fell for a spell entranced,
  As cold as a corpse of stone,
And heard your brains, as they laughed and danced
  And talked in an undertone.

One brought a bird that could whistle a tune
  So piercingly pure and sweet,
That tears would fall from the eyes of the moon
  In dewdrops at its feet;
And the winds would sigh at the sweet refrain,
  Till they swooned in an ecstasy,
To awaken again in a hurricane
  Of riot and jubilee.

One brought a lute that was wro't of a shell
  Luminous as the shine
Of a new-born star in a dewy dell,—
  And its strings were strands of wine
That sprayed at the Fancy's touch and fused,
  As your listening spirit leant
Drunken through with the airs that oozed
  From the o'ersweet instrument.

One brought a tablet of ivory
  Whereon no thing was writ,—
But, at night—and the dazzled eyes would see
  Flickering lines o'er it,—
And each, as you read from the magic tome,
  Lightened and died in flame,
And the memory held but a golden poem
  Too beautiful to name.

Till it seemed all marvels that ever were known
  Or dreamed of under the sun
Were brought and displayed at the royal throne,
  And put by, one by one;—
Till a graybeard monster came to the King—
  Haggard and wrinkled and old—
And spread to his gaze this wondrous thing,—
  A gossamer veil of gold.—

Strangely marvellous—mocking the gaze
  Like a tangle of bright sunshine,
Dipping a million glittering rays
  In a baptism divine:

And a maiden, sheened in this gauze attire—
  Sifting a glance of her eye—
Dazzled men's souls with a fierce desire
  To kiss and caress her and—die.

And the grim King swore by his royal beard
  That the veil had won the prize,
While the gray old monster blinked and leered
  With his lashless, red-rimmed eyes,
As the fainting form of the princess fell,
  And the mother's heart went wild,
Throbbing and swelling a muffled knell
  For the dead hopes of her child.

But her clouded face with a faint smile shone,
  As suddenly, through the throng,
Pushing his way to the royal throne,
  A fair youth strode along,
While a strange smile hovered about his eyes,
  As he said to the grim old King:—
"The veil of gold must lose the prize;
  For *I* have a stranger thing."

He bent and whispered a sentence brief;
  But the monarch shook his head,
With a look expressive of unbelief—
  "It can't be so," he said;
"Or give me proof; and I, the King,
  Give you my daughter's hand.—
For certes THAT *is* a stranger thing—
  The strangest thing in the land!"

Then the fair youth, turning, caught the Queen
  In a rapturous caress,
While his lithe form towered in lordly mien,
  As he said in a brief address:—
"My fair bride's mother is this; and, lo,
  As you stare in your royal awe,
By this pure kiss do I proudly show
  A love for a mother-in-law!"

Then a thaw set in on the old King's mood,
  And a sweet Spring freshet came
Into his eyes, and his heart renewed
  Its love for the favored dame:
But often he has been heard to declare
  That "he never could clearly see
How, in the deuce, such a strange affair
  Could have ended so happily!"

392 *We Are Not Always Glad When We Smile*

WE are not always glad when we smile:
  Though we wear a fair face and are gay,
And the world we deceive
  May not ever believe
We could laugh in a happier way.—
Yet, down in the deeps of the soul,
  Ofttimes, with our faces aglow,
There's an ache and a moan
  That we know of alone,
And as only the hopeless may know,

We are not always glad when we smile,—
For the heart, in a tempest of pain,
May live in the guise
Of a smile in the eyes
As a rainbow may live in the rain;
And the stormiest night of our woe
May hang out a radiant star
Whose light in the sky
Of despair is a lie
As black as the thunder-clouds are.

We are not always glad when we smile!—
But the conscience is quick to record,
All the sorrow and sin
We are hiding within
Is plain in the sight of the Lord:
And ever, O ever, till pride
And evasion shall cease to defile
The sacred recess
Of the soul, we confess
We are not always glad when we smile.

393 *Busch and Tommy*

LITTLE Busch and Tommy Hays—
Small the theme, but large the praise.
For two braver brothers,
Of such toddling years and size,
Bloom of face, and blue of eyes,
Never trampled soldier-wise
On the rights of mothers!

Even boldly facing their
Therapeutic father's air
  Of complex abstraction,
But to kindle—kindlier gaze,
Wake more smiles and gracious ways—
Ay, nor find in all their days
  Ampler satisfaction!

Hail ye, then, with chirp and cheer,
All wan patients, waiting here
  Bitterer medications!—
Busch and Tommy, *tone* us, too.—
How our life-blood leaps anew,
Under loving touch of you
  And your ministrations!

394

A Variation

I AM tired of this!
  Nothing else but loving!
Nothing else but kiss and kiss,
  Coo, and turtle-doving!
    Can't you change the order some?
    Hate me just a little—come!

Lay aside your "dears,"
  "Darlings," "kings," and "princes!"—
Call me knave, and dry your tears—
  Nothing in me winces,—
    Call me something low and base—
    Something that will suit the case!

Wish I had your eyes
  And their drooping lashes!
I would dry their teary lies
  Up with lightning-flashes—
    Make your sobbing lips unsheathe
    All the glitter of your teeth!

Can't you lift one word—
  With some pang of laughter—
Louder than the drowsy bird
  Crooning 'neath the rafter?
    Just one bitter word, to shriek
    Madly at me as I speak!

How I hate the fair
  Beauty of your forehead!
How I hate your fragrant hair!
  How I hate the torrid
    Touches of your splendid lips,
    And the kiss that drips and drips!

Ah, you pale at last!
  And your face is lifted
Like a white sail to the blast,
  And your hands are shifted
    Into fists: and, towering thus,
    You are simply glorious!

Now before me looms,
  Something more than human;

Something more than beauty blooms
In the wrath of Woman—
Something to bow down before
Reverently and adore.

395 *An Out-Worn Sappho*

HOW tired I am! I sink down all alone
Here by the wayside of the Present. Lo,
Even as a child I hide my face and moan—
A little girl that may no farther go:
The path above me only seems to grow
More rugged, climbing still, and ever briered
With keener thorns of pain than these below;
And O the bleeding feet that falter so
And are so very tired!

Why, I have journeyed from the far-off Lands
Of Babyhood—where baby-lilies blew
Their trumpets in mine ears, and filled my hands
With treasures of perfume and honey-dew,
And where the orchard shadows ever drew
Their cool arms round me when my cheeks were fired
With too much joy, and lulled mine eyelids to,
And only let the starshine trickle through
In sprays, when I was tired!

Yet I remember, when the butterfly
Went flickering about me like a flame
That quenched itself in roses suddenly,
How oft I wished that *I* might blaze the same,

And in some rose-wreath nestle with my name,
While all the world looked on it and admired.—
Poor moth!—Along my wavering flight toward fame
The winds drive backward, and my wings are lame
And broken, bruised and tired!

I hardly know the path from those old times:
I know at first it was a smoother one
Than this that hurries past me now, and climbs
So high, its far cliffs even hide the sun
And shroud in gloom my journey scarce begun.
I could not do quite all the world required—
I could not do quite all I should have done,
And in my eagerness I have outrun
My strength—and I am tired. . . .

Just tired! But when of old I had the stay
Of mother-hands, O very sweet indeed
It was to dream that all the weary way
I should but follow where I now must lead—
For long ago they left me in my need,
And, groping on alone, I tripped and mired
Among rank grasses where the serpents breed
In knotted coils about the feet of speed.—
There first it was I tired.

And yet I staggered on, and bore my load
Right gallantly: The sun, in summer-time,
In lazy belts came slipping down the road
To woo me on, with many a glimmering rhyme
Rained from the golden rim of some fair clime,

That, hovering beyond the clouds, inspired
My failing heart with fancies so sublime
I half forgot my path of dust and grime,
Though I was growing tired.

And there were many voices cheering me:
I listened to sweet praises where the wind
Went laughing o'er my shoulders gleefully
And scattering my love-songs far behind;—
Until, at last, I thought the world so kind—
So rich in all my yearning soul desired—
So generous—so loyally inclined,
I grew to love and trust it. . . . I was blind—
Yea, blind as I was tired!

And yet one hand held me in creature-touch:
And O, how fain it was, how true and strong,
How it did hold my heart up like a crutch,
Till, in my dreams, I joyed to walk along
The toilsome way, contented with a song—
'Twas all of earthly things I had acquired,
And 'twas enough, I feigned, or right or wrong,
Since, binding me to man—a mortal thong—
It stayed me, growing tired. . . .

Yea, I had e'en resigned me to the strait
Of earthly rulership—had bowed my head
Acceptant of the master-mind—the great
One lover—lord of all,—the perfected
Kiss-comrade of my soul;—had stammering said
My prayers to him;—all—all that he desired
I rendered sacredly as we were wed.—

Nay—nay!—'twas but a myth I worshippèd.—
And—God of love!—how tired!

For, O my friends, to lose the latest grasp—
To feel the last hope slipping from its hold—
To feel the one fond hand within your clasp
Fall slack, and loosen with a touch so cold
Its pressure may not warm you as of old
Before the light of love had thus expired—
To know your tears are worthless, though they rolled
Their torrents out in molten drops of gold.—
God's pity! I am tired!

And I must rest.—Yet do not say "She *died*,"
In speaking of me, sleeping here alone.
I kiss the grassy grave I sink beside,
And close mine eyes in slumber all mine own:
Hereafter I shall neither sob nor moan
Nor murmur one complaint;—all I desired,
And failed in life to find, will now be known—
So let me dream. Good night! And on the stone
Say simply: She was tired.

396 *After Death*

AH! this delights me more than words could tell,—
To just lie stark and still, with folded hands
That tremble not at greeting or farewell,
Nor fumble foolishly in loosened strands
Of woman's hair, nor grip with jealousy
To find her face turned elsewhere smilingly.

With slumbrous lids, and mouth in mute repose,
  And lips that yearn no more for any kiss—
Though it might drip, as from the red-lipped rose
  The dewdrop drips, 'twere not so sweet as this
    Unutterable density of rest
    That reigns in every vein of brain and breast!

And thus—soaked with still laughter through and through—
  I lie here dreaming of the forms that pass
Above my grave, to drop, with tears, a few
  White flowers that but curdle the green grass;—
    And if they read such sermons, they could see
    How I do pity them that pity me.

397 *To the Wine-God Merlus*

[*A Toast of Jucklet's*]

HO! ho! thou jolly god, with kinkèd lips
And laughter-streaming eyes, thou liftest up
The heart of me like any wassail-cup,
And from its teeming brim, in foaming drips,
Thou blowest all my cares. I cry to thee,
Between the sips:—Drink long and lustily;
Drink thou my ripest joys, my richest mirth,
My maddest staves of wanton minstrelsy;
Drink every song I've tinkered here on earth
With any patch of music; drink! and be
Thou drainer of my soul, and to the lees
Drink all my lover-thrills and ecstasies;
And with a final gulp—ho! ho!—drink me,
And roll me o'er thy tongue eternally.

398 A Lounger

HE leaned against a lamp-post, lost
In some mysterious reverie:
His head was bowed; his arms were crossed;
He yawned, and glanced evasively:
Uncrossed his arms, and slowly put
Them back again, and scratched his side—
Shifted his weight from foot to foot,
And gazed out no-ward, idle-eyed.

Grotesque of form and face and dress,
And picturesque in every way—
A figure that from day to day
Drooped with a limper laziness;
A figure such as artists lean,
In pictures where distress is seen,
Against low hovels where we guess
No happiness has ever been.

399 The Willow

WHO shall sing a simple ditty all about the Willow,
Dainty-fine and delicate as any bending spray
That dandles high the happy bird that flutters there to trill a
Tremulously tender song of greeting to the May.

Bravest, too, of all the trees!—none to match your daring,—
First of greens to greet the Spring and lead in leafy sheen;—
Aye, and you're the last—almost into winter wearing
Still the leaf of loyalty—still the badge of green.

Ah, my lovely Willow!—let the Waters lilt your graces,—
They alone with limpid kisses lave your leaves above,
Flashing back your sylvan beauty, and in shady places
Peering up with glimmering pebbles, like the eyes of love.

400 · *The Quest*

I AM looking for Love. Has he passed this way,
With eyes as blue as the skies of May,
And a face as fair as the summer dawn?—
You answer back, but I wander on,—
For you say: "Oh, yes; but his eyes were gray,
And his face as dim as a rainy day."

Good friends, I query, I search for Love;
His eyes are as blue as the skies above,
And his smile as bright as the midst of May
When the truce-bird pipes: Has he passed this way?
And one says: "Ay; but his face, alack!
Frowned as he passed, and his eyes were black."

O who will tell me of Love? I cry!
His eyes are as blue as the mid-May sky,
And his face as bright as the morning sun;
And you answer and mock me, every one,
That his eyes were dark, and his face was wan,
And he passed you frowning and wandered on.

But stout of heart will I onward fare,
Knowing *my* Love is beyond—somewhere,—

The Love I seek, with the eyes of blue,
And the bright, sweet smile unknown of you;
And on from the hour his trail is found
I shall sing sonnets the whole year round.

401 *"Dream"*

BECAUSE her eyes were far too deep
And holy for a laugh to leap
Across the brink where sorrow tried
To drown within the amber tide;
Because the looks, whose ripples kissed
The trembling lids through tender mist,
Were dazzled with a radiant gleam—
Because of this I called her "Dream."

Because the roses growing wild
About her features when she smiled
Were ever dewed with tears that fell
With tenderness ineffable;
Because her lips might spill a kiss
That, dripping in a world like this,
Would tincture death's myrrh-bitter stream
To sweetness—so I called her "Dream."

Because I could not understand
The magic touches of a hand
That seemed, beneath her strange control,
To smooth the plumage of the soul
And calm it, till, with folded wings,
It half forgot its flutterings,

And, nestled in her palm, did seem
To trill a song that called her "Dream."

Because I saw her, in a sleep
As dark and desolate and deep
And fleeting as the taunting night
That flings a vision of delight
To some lorn martyr as he lies
In slumber ere the day he dies—
Because she vanished like a gleam
Of glory, do I call her "Dream."

402 *The Little White Hearse*

AS the little white hearse went glimmering by—
The man on the coal-cart jerked his lines,
And smutted the lid of either eye,
And turned and stared at the business signs;
And the street-car driver stopped and beat
His hands on his shoulders, and gazed up street
Till his eye on the long track reached the sky—
As the little white hearse went glimmering by.

As the little white hearse went glimmering by—
A stranger petted a ragged child
In the crowded walks, and she knew not why,
But he gave her a coin for the way she smiled;
And a boot-black thrilled with a pleasure strange,
As a customer put back his change
With a kindly hand and a grateful sigh,
As the little white hearse went glimmering by.

As the little white hearse went glimmering by—
A man looked out of a window dim,
And his cheeks were wet and his heart was dry,
For a dead child even were dear to him!
And he thought of his empty life, and said:—
"Loveless alive, and loveless dead—
Nor wife nor child in earth or sky!"
As the little white hearse went glimmering by.

403 *Three Several Birds*

The Romancer, the Poet, and the Bookman

I

THE ROMANCER

THE Romancer's a nightingale,—
The moon wanes dewy-dim
And all the stars grow faint and pale
In listening to him.—
To him the plot least plausible
Is of the most avail,—
He simply masters it because
He takes it by the tale.

O he's a nightingale,—
His theme will never fail—
It gains applause of all—because
He takes it by the tale!

The Romancer's a nightingale:—
  His is the sweetest note—
The sweetest, woe-begonest wail
  Poured out of mortal throat:
So, glad or sad, he ever draws
  Our best godspeed and hail;
He highest lifts his theme—because
  He takes it by the tale.

O he's a nightingale,—
His theme will never fail—
It gains applause of all—because
He takes it by the tale!

II

THE POET

The bobolink he sings a single song,
  Right along,—
And the robin sings another, all his own—
  One alone;
And the whippoorwill, and bluebird,
And the cockadoodle-doo-bird;—
But the mocking-bird he sings in every tone
  Ever known,
Or chirrup-note of merriment or moan.

So the Poet he's the mocking-bird of men,—
He steals his songs and sings them o'er again;
And yet beyond believing
They're the sweeter for his thieving.—

So we'll howl for Mister Mocking-bird
And have him out again!

It's mighty fond we are of bobolinks,
And chewinks;
And we dote on dinky robins, quite a few—
Yes, we do;
And we love the dove, and bluebird,
And the cockadoodle-doo-bird,—
But the mocking-bird's the bird for me and you,
Through and through,
Since he sings as everybody wants him to.

Ho! the Poet he's the mocking-bird of men,—
He steals his songs and sings them o'er again;
And yet beyond believing
They're the sweeter for his thieving.—
So we'll howl for Mister Mocking-bird
And have him out again!

III

BOOKMAN'S CATCH

The Bookman he's a humming-bird—
His feasts are honey-fine,—
(With hi! hilloo!
And clover-dew
And roses lush and rare!)
His roses are the phrase and word
Of olden tomes divine;

(With hi! and ho!
And pinks ablow
And posies everywhere!)
The Bookman he's a humming-bird,—
He steals from song to song—
He scents the ripest-blooming rhyme,
And takes his heart along
And sacks all sweets of bursting verse
And ballads, throng on throng.
(With ho! and hey!
And brook and brae,
And brinks of shade and shine!)

A humming-bird the Bookman is—
Though cumbrous, gray and grim,—
(With hi! hilloo!
And honey-dew
And odors musty-rare!)
He bends him o'er that page of his
As o'er the rose's rim.
(With hi! and ho!
And pinks aglow
And roses everywhere!)
Ay, he's the featest humming-bird,
On airiest of wings
He poises pendent o'er the poem
That blossoms as it sings—
God friend him as he dips his beak
In such delicious things!
(With ho! and hey!
And world away
And only dreams for him!)

404

To Bliss Carman

HE is the morning's poet—
The bard of mount and moor,
The minstrel fine of dewy shine,
The dawning's troubadour:

The brother of the bluebird,
'Mid blossoms, throng on throng,
Whose singing calls, o'er orchard walls,
Seem glitterings of song.

He meets, with brow uncovered,
The sunrise through the mist,
With raptured eyes that range the skies
And seas of amethyst:

The brambled rose clings to him;
The breezy wood receives
Him as the guest she loves the best
And laughs through all her leaves:

Pan and his nymphs and dryads
They hear, in breathless pause,
This earth-born wight lilt his delight,
And envy him because . . .

He is the morning's poet—
The bard of mount and moor,
The minstrel fine of dewy shine,
The dawning's troubadour.

405 *His Mother*

DEAD! my wayward boy—*my own*—
Not *the Law's!* but *mine*—the good
God's free gift to me alone,
Sanctified by motherhood.
"Bad," you say: Well, who is not?
"Brutal"—"with a heart of stone"—
And "red-handed."—Ah! the hot
Blood upon your own!
I come not, with downward eyes,
To plead for him shamedly,—
God did not apologize
When He gave the boy to me.
Simply, I make ready now
For *His* verdict.—*You* prepare—
You have killed us both—and how
Will you face us There!

406 *Song of Parting*

SAY farewell, and let me go;
Shatter every vow!
All the future can bestow
Will be welcome now!
And if this fair hand I touch
I have worshipped overmuch,
It was my mistake—and so,
Say farewell, and let me go.

Say farewell, and let me go:
Murmur no regret,
Stay your tear-drops ere they flow—
Do not waste them yet!

They might pour as pours the rain,
And not wash away the pain:—
I have tried them and I know.—
Say farewell, and let me go.

Say farewell, and let me go:
Think me not untrue—
True as truth is, even so
I am true to you!
If the ghost of love may stay
Where my fond heart dies to-day,
I am with you alway—so,
Say farewell, and let me go.

407

Some Imitations

I

POMONA

(*Madison Cawein*)

OH, the golden afternoon!—
Like a ripened summer day
That had fallen oversoon
In the weedy orchard-way
As an apple, ripe in June,

He had left his fishrod leant
O'er the footlog by the spring—
Clomb the hill-path's high ascent,
Whence a voice, down showering,
Lured him, wondering as he went.

Not the voice of bee nor bird,
  Nay, nor voice of man nor child,
Nor the creek's shoal-alto heard
  Blent with warblings sweet and wild
Of the midstream, music-stirred.

'Twas a goddess! As the air
  Swirled to eddying silence, he
Glimpsed about him, half aware
  Of some subtle sorcery
Woven round him everywhere.

Suavest slopes of pleasaunce, sown
  With long lines of fruited trees
Weighed o'er grasses all unmown
  But by scythings of the breeze
In prone swaths that flashed and shone

Like silk locks of Faunus sleeked
  This, that way, and contrawise,
Through whose bredes ambrosial leaked
  Oily amber sheens and dyes
Starred with petals purple-freaked

Here the bellflower swayed and swung,
  Greenly belfried high amid
Thick leaves in whose covert sung
  Hermit-thrush, or katydid,
Or the glowworm nightly clung.

Here the damson, peach and pear;
  There the plum, in Tyrian tints,

Like great grapes in clusters rare;
  And the metal-heavy quince
Like a plummet dangled there.

All ethereal, yet all
  Most material,—a theme
Of some fabled festival—
  Save the fair face of his dream
Smiling o'er the orchard wall.

II

THE PASSING OF A ZEPHYR

(*Sidney Lanier*)

UP from, and out of, and over the opulent woods and the plains,
Lo! I leap nakedly loose, as the nudest of gods might choose,
For to dash me away through the morning dews
And the rathe Spring rains—
Pat and pet the little green leaves of the trees and the grass,
Till they seem to linger and cling, as I pass,
And are touched to delicate contemporaneous tears of the rain and the dew,
That lure mine eyes to weeping likewise, and to laughter, too:
For I am become as the balmiest, stormiest zephyr of Spring,
With manifold beads of the marvelous dew and the rain to string

On the bended strands of the blossoms, blown
And tossed and tousled and overthrown,
And shifted and whirled, and lifted unfurled
In the victory of the blossoming
Of the flags of the flowery world.
Yea, and behold! and a riotous zephyr, at last,
I subside; I abate; I pass by; I am past.
And the small, hoarse bass of the bumble-bee
Is my requiem-psalm,
And I fling me down to a listless, loitering, long eternity
Of amiable calm.

III

A RHYME FOR CHRISTMAS

IF *Browning* only were here
This yule-ish time o' the year—
This mul-ish time o' the year,
Stubbornly still refusing
To add to the rhymes we've been using
Since the first Christmas-glee
(One might say) chantingly
Rendered by rudest hinds
Of the pelt-clad shepherding kinds
Who didn't know Song from b-
U-double-l's-foot!—pah!—
(Haply the old Egyptian *ptah*—
Though I'd hardly wager a baw-
Bee—or a *bumble,* for that—
And that's flat!) . . .

But the thing that I want to get at
Is a rhyme for *Christmas*—
Nay! nay! nay! nay! not *isthmus*—
The t- and the h-sounds covertly are
Gnawing the nice auricular
Senses until one may hear them gnar—
And the terminal, too, for m*as* is m*us*,
So *that* will not do for us.
Try for it—sigh for it—cry for it—die for it!
O *but* if Browning were here to apply for it,
He'd rhyme you *Christmas*—
He'd make a *mist pass*
Over—something o' ruther—
Or find you the rhyme's very brother
In lovers that *kissed fast*
To baffle the moon—as he'd lose the *t*-final
In fas-t as it blended with *to* (mark the spinal
Elison—tip-clipt as exquisitely nicely
And hyper-exactly sliced to precisely
The extremest technical need): Or he'd *twist glass*,
Or he'd have a *kissed lass*,
Or shake 'neath our noses some great giant *fist-mass*—
No matter! If Robert were here, *he* could do it,
Though it took us till Christmas next year to see through it.

408 *To Benj. S. Parker*

BORN, FEBRUARY 10, 1833—DIED, MARCH 14, 1911

Written for The Indianapolis Star

YOU sang the song of rare delight
"'Tis morning and the days are long"—
A morning fresh and fair and bright
As ever dawned in happy song;
A radiant air, and here and there
Were singing birds on sprays of bloom,
And dewy splendors everywhere,
And heavenly breaths of rose perfume—
All rapturous things were in the song
"'Tis morning and the days are long."

O singer of the song divine,
Though now you turn your face away
With never word for me or mine
Nor smile forever and a day,
We guess your meaning, and rejoice
In what has come to you—the meed
Beyond the search of mortal voice
And only in the song indeed—
With you forever, as the song,
"'Tis morning and the days are long."

409

L'Envoy

SNOW is in the air—
Chill in blood and vein,—
Winter everywhere
Save in heart and brain!
Ho! the happy year will we
Mimic as we've found it,—
Head of it—and you, and me—
With the holly round it!

Frost and sleet, alack!—
Wind as bleak as wrath
Whips our faces back
As we foot the path;—
But the year—from there to here—
Copy as we've found it,—
Heart up—like the head, my dear,
With the holly round it!

THE FLYING ISLANDS OF THE NIGHT

FOR the Song's sake; even so:
Humor it, and let it go
All untamed and wild of wing—
Leave it ever truanting.

Be its flight elusive!—Lo,
For the Song's sake—even so.—
Yield it but an ear as kind
As thou perkest to the wind.

Who will name us what the seas
Have sung on for centuries?
For the Song's sake! Even so—
Sing, O Seas! and Breezes, blow!

Sing! or Wave or Wind or Bird—
Sing! nor ever afterward
Clear thy meaning to us—No!—
For the Song's sake. Even so.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KRUNG	King—*of the* Spirks
CRESTILLOMEEM	*The* Queen—*Second Consort to* Krung
SPRAIVOLL	*The* Tune-Fool
AMPHINE	Prince—*Son of* Krung
DWAINIE	*A* Princess—*of the* Wurks
JUCKLET	*A* Dwarf—*of the* Spirks
CREECH *and* GRITCHFANG	Nightmares

Counsellors, Courtiers, Heralds, etc., etc., etc.

410 *The Flying Islands of the Night*

ACT I

SCENE—THE FLYING ISLANDS

SCENE I. Spirkland. *Time, Moondawn. Interior Court of* KRUNG. *A vast pendent star burns dimly in dome above throne.* CRESTILLOMEEM *discovered languidly reclining at foot of empty throne, an overturned goblet lying near, as though just drained. The* Queen, *in seeming dazed, ecstatic state, raptly gazing upward, listening. Swarming forms and features in air above, seem ecricly coming and going, blending and intermingling in domed ceiling-spaces of court. Weird music. Mystic, luminous, beautiful faces detached from swarm, float, singly, forward,—tremulously, and in succession, poising in mid-air and chanting.*

FIRST FACE

And who hath known her— like as *I*
Have known her?—since the envying sky
Filched from her cheeks its morning-hue,
And from her eyes its glory, too,
Of dazzling shine and diamond-dew.

SECOND FACE

I knew her—long and long before
High Æo loosed her palm and thought:
"What awful splendor have I wrought
To dazzle earth and Heaven, too!"

Third Face

I knew her—long ere Night was o'er—
Ere Æo yet conjectured what
To fashion Day of—ay, before
He sprinkled stars across the floor
Of dark, and swept that form of mine,
E'en as a fleck of blinded shine,
Back to the black where light was not.

Fourth Face

Ere day was dreamt, I saw her face
Lift from some starry hiding-place
Where our old moon was kneeling while
She lit its features with her smile.

Fifth Face

I knew her while these islands yet
Were nestlings—ere they feathered wing,
Or e'en could gape with them or get
Apoise the laziest-ambling breeze,
Or cheep, chirp out, or anything!
When Time crooned rhymes of nurseries
Above them—nodded, dozed and slept,
And knew it not, till, wakening,
The morning-stars agreed to sing
And Heaven's first tender dews were wept.

Sixth Face

I knew her when the jealous hands
Of Angels set her sculptured form
Upon a pedestal of storm
And let her to this land with strands
Of twisted lightnings.

Seventh Face

And I heard
Her voice ere she could tone a word
Of any but the Seraph-tongue.—
And O sad-sweeter than all sung-
Or word-said things!—to hear her say,
Between the tears she dashed away:—
"Lo, launched from the offended sight
Of Æo!—anguish infinite
Is ours, O Sisterhood of Sin!
Yet is thy service mine by right,
And, sweet as I may rule it, thus
Shall Sin's myrrh-savor taste to us—
Sin's Empress—let my reign begin!"

Chorus of Swarming Faces

We follow thee forever on!
Thro' darkest night and dimmest dawn;
Thro' storm and calm—thro' shower and shine,
Hear thou our voices answering thine:
We follow—*craving* but to be
Thy followers.—We follow thee—
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on—
O'er hill and hollow, brake and lawn;
Thro' grewsome vale and dread ravine
Where light of day is never seen.—
We waver not in loyalty,—
Unfaltering we follow thee—
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on!
The shroud of night around us drawn,
Though wet with mists, is wild-ashine
With stars to light that path of thine;—
The glow-worms, too, befriend us—we
Shall fail not as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on.—
The notchèd reeds we pipe upon
Are pithed with music, keener blown
And blither where thou leadest lone—
Glad pangs of its ecstatic glee
Shall reach thee as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on:
We know the ways thy feet have gone,—
The grass is greener, and the bloom
Of roses richer in perfume—
And birds of every blooming tree
Sing sweeter as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

We follow ever on and on;
For wheresoever thou hast gone
We hasten joyous, knowing there
Is sweeter sin than otherwhere—
Leave still its latest cup, that we
May drain it as we follow thee.
We follow, follow, follow thee!

[*Throughout final stanzas, faces in fore- and forms in background slowly vanish, and voices gradually fail to sheer silence.*—CRESTILLOMEEM, *rising, and wistfully gazing and listening; then, evidently regaining wonted self, looks to be assured of being wholly alone—then speaks.*]

CRESTILLOMEEM

The Throne is throwing wide its gilded arms
To welcome me. The Throne of Krung! Ha! ha!
Leap up, ye lazy echoes, and laugh loud!
For I, Crestillomeem, the Queen—ha! ha!
Do fling my richest mirth into your mouths
That ye may fatten ripe with mockery!
I marvel what the kingdom would become
Were I not here to nurse it like a babe
And dandle it above the reach and clutch
Of intermeddlers in the royal line
And their attendant serfs. *Ho!* Jucklet, ho!
'Tis time my knarlèd warp of nice anatomy
Were here, to weave us on upon our mesh
Of silken villanies. *Ho!* Jucklet, ho!

[*Lifts secret door in pave and drops a star-bud through opening. Enter* JUCKLET *from below.*]

JUCKLET

Spang sprit! my gracious Queen! but thou hast scorched
My left ear to a cinder! and my head
Rings like a ding-dong on the coast of death!
For, patient hate! thy hasty signal burst
Full in my face as hitherward I came!
But though my lug be fried to crisp, and my
Singed wig stinks like a little sun-stewed Wunk,
I stretch my fragrant presence at thy feet
And kiss thy sandal with a blistered lip.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Hold! rare-done fool, lest I may bid the cook
To bake thee brown! How fares the King by this?

JUCKLET

Safe couched midmost his lordly hoard of books,
I left him sleeping like a quinsied babe
Next the guest chamber of a poor man's house:
But ere I came away, to rest mine ears,
I salved his welded lids, uncorked his nose,
And o'er the odorous blossom of his lips
Re-squeezed the tinctured sponge, and felt his pulse
Come staggering back to regularity.
And four hours hence his Highness will awake
And *Peace* will take a nap!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Ha! What mean you?

JUCKLET [*Ominously*]

I mean that he suspects our knaveries.—
Some covert spy is burrowed in the court—
Nay, and I pray thee startle not *aloud,*
But mute thy very heart in its out-throb,
And let the blanching of thy cheeks but be
A whispering sort of pallor!

CRESTILLOMEEM

A spy?—Here?

JUCKLET

Ay, *here*—and haply even *now.* And one
Whose unseen eye seems ever focussed keen
Upon our action, and whose hungering ear
Eats every crumb of counsel that we drop
In these our secret interviews!—For he—
The King—through all his talking-sleep to-day
Hath jabbered of intrigue, conspiracy—
Of treachery and hate in fellowship,
With dire designs upon his royal bulk,
To oust it from the Throne.

CRESTILLOMEEM

He spake my name?

JUCKLET

O Queen, he speaks not ever but thy name
Makes melody of every sentence.—Yea,
He thinks thee even true to him as thou
Art fickle, false and subtle! O how blind

And lame, and deaf and dumb, and worn and weak,
And faint, and sick, and all-commodious
His dear love is! In sooth, O wifely one,
Thy malleable spouse doth mind me of
That pliant hero of the bald old catch
"The Lovely Husband."—Shall I wreak the thing?

[*Sings—with much affected gravity and grimace*]

O a lovely husband he was known,
He loved his wife and her a-lone;
She reaped the harvest he had sown;
She ate the meat; he picked the bone.
With mixed admirers every size,
She smiled on each without disguise;
This lovely husband closed his eyes
Lest he might take her by surprise.

[*Aside, exclamatory*]

Chorious Uproarious!

[*Then pantomime as though pulling at bell-rope singing in pent, explosive utterance.*]

Trot!
Run!
Wasn't he a handy hubby?
What
Fun
She could plot and plan!
Not
One
Other such a dandy hubby
As this lovely man!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Or talk or tune, wilt thou wind up thy tongue
Nor let it tangle in a knot of words!
What said the King?

JUCKLET [*With recovered reverence*]

He said: "Crestillomeem—
O that *she* knew this thick distress of mine!—
Her counsel would *anoint* me and her voice
Would flow in limpid wisdom o'er my woes
And, like a love-balm, lave my secret grief
And lull my sleepless heart!" [*Aside*] And so went on.
Struggling all maudlin in the wrangled web
That well-nigh hath cocooned him!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Did he yield
No hint of this mysterious distress
He needs must hold sequestered from his Queen?
What said he in his talking-sleep by which
Some clew were gained of how and when and whence
His trouble came?

JUCKLET

In one strange phase he spake
As though some sprited lady talked with him.—
Full courteously he said: "In woman's guise
Thou comest, yet I think thou art, in sooth,
But woman in thy form.—Thy words are strange
And leave me mystified. I feel the truth
Of all thou hast declared, and yet so vague

And shadow-like thy meaning is to me,
I know not how to act to ward the blow
Thou sayest is hanging o'er me even now."
And then, with open hands held pleadingly,
He asked, "Who *is* my foe?"—And o'er his face
A sudden pallor flashed, like death itself,
As though, if answer had been given, it
Had fallen like a curse.

CRESTILLOMEEM

I'll stake my soul
Thrice over in the grinning teeth of doom,
'Tis Dwainie of the Wunks who peeks and peers
With those fine eyes of hers in our affairs
And carries Krung, in some disguise, these hints
Of our intent! See thou that silence falls
Forever on her lips, and that the sight
She wastes upon our secret action blurs
With gray and grisly scum that shall for aye
Conceal us from her gaze while she writhes blind
And fangless as the fat worms of the grave!
Here! take this tuft of downy druze, and when
Thou comest on her, fronting full and fair,
Say "*Sherzham!*" thrice, and fluff it in her face.

JUCKLET

Thou knowest scanty magic, O my Queen,
But all thou dost is fairly excellent—
And *this* charm work, thou shalt have fuller faith
Than still I must withhold.

[*Takes charm, with extravagant salutation*]

CRESTILLOMEEM

Thou gibing knave!
Thou thing! Dost dare to name my sorcery
As any trifling gift? Behold what might
Be thine an thy deserving wavered not
In stable and abiding service to
Thy Queen!

[*She presses suddenly her palm upon his eyes, then lifts her softly opening hand upward, his gaze following, where, slowly shaping in the air above them, appears semblance — or counter-self — of* CRESTILLOMEEM, *clothed in most radiant youth, her maiden-face bent downward to a moon-lit sward, where kneels a lover-knight—flawless in manly symmetry and princely beauty,—yet none other than the counter-self of* JUCKLET, *eerily and with strange sweetness singing, to some curiously tinkling instrument, the praises of its queenly mistress:* JUCKLET *and* CRESTILLOMEEM *transfixed below—trancedly gazing on their mystic selves above.*]

SEMBLANCE OF JUCKLET [*Sings*]

Crestillomeem!
Crestillomeem!
Soul of my slumber!—Dream of my dream!
Moonlight may fall not as goldenly fair
As falls the gold of thine opulent hair—
Nay, nor the starlight as dazzlingly gleam
As gleam thine eyes, 'Meema—Crestillomeem!—
Stars of the skies, 'Meema—
Crestillomeem!

SEMBLANCE OF CRESTILLOMEEM [*Sings*]

O Prince divine!
O Prince divine!
Tempt thou me not with that sweet voice of thine!
Though my proud brow bear the blaze of a crown,
Lo, at thy feet must its glory bow down,
That from the dust thou mayest lift me to shine
Heaven'd in thy heart's rapture, O Prince divine!
Queen of thy love ever,
O Prince divine!

SEMBLANCE OF JUCKLET [*Sings*]

Crestillomeem!
Crestillomeem!
Our life shall flow as a musical stream—
Windingly—placidly on shall it wend,
Marged with mazhoora-bloom banks without end—
Word-birds shall call thee and dreamily scream,
"Where dost thou cruise, 'Meema—Crestillomeem?
Whither away, 'Meema?—
Crestillomeem!"

DUO

[*Vision and voices gradually failing away*]

Crestillomeem!
Crestillomeem!
Soul of my slumber!—Dream of my dream!
Star of Love's light, 'Meema—Crestillomeem!
Crescent of Night, 'Meema!—
Crestillomeem!

[*With song, vision likewise fails utterly*]

CRESTILLOMEEM

[*To* JUCKLET, *still trancedly staring upward*]

How now, thou clabber-brainèd spudge!—
Thou squelk!—thou—

JUCKLET

Nay, O Queen! contort me not
To more condensèd littleness than now
My shamèd frame incurreth on itself,
Seeing what might fare with it, didst *thou* will
Kindly to nip it with thy magic *here*
And leave it living in that form i' the air,
Forever pranking o'er the daisied sward
In wake of sandal-prints that dint the dews
As lightly as, in thy late maidenhood,
Thine own must needs have done in flighting from
The dread encroachments of the King.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Nay—peace!

JUCKLET

So be it, O sweet Mystic.—But I crave
One service of thy magic yet.—*Amphine!*—
Breed me some special, damnèd philter for
Amphine—the *fair* Amphine!—to chuck it him,
Some serenade-tide, in a sodden slug
O' pastry, 'twixt the door-crack and a screech

O' rusty hinges.—Hey! Amphine, the *fair!*—
And let me, too, elect his doom, O Queen!—
Listed against thee, he, too, doubtless hath
Been favored with an outline of our scheme.—
And I would kick my soul all over hell
If I might juggle his fine figure up
In such a shape as mine!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Then this:—When thou
Canst come upon him bent above a flower,
Or any blooming thing, and thou, arear,
Shalt reach it first and, thwartwise, touch it fair,
And with thy knuckle flick him on the knee.—
Then—his fine form will shrink and shrivel up
As warty as a toad's—so hideous,
Thine own shall seem a marvel of rare grace!
Though idly speak'st thou of my mystic skill,
'Twas that which won the King for me;—'twas that
Bereft him of his daughter ere we had
Been wedded yet a hael:—She strangely went
Astray one moonset from the palace-steps—
She went—nor yet returned.—Was it not strange?—
She would be wedded to an alien prince
The morrow midnight—to a prince whose sire
I once knew, in lost hours of lute and song,
When *he* was but a prince—*I* but a mouth
For him to lift up sippingly and drain
To lees most ultimate of stammering sobs
And maudlin wanderings of blinded breath.

JUCKLET [*Aside*]

Twigg-brebblets! but her Majesty hath speech
That doth bejuice all metaphor to drip
And spray and mist of sweetness!

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Confusedly*]

Where was I?
O, ay!—The princess went—she strangely went!—
E'en as I deemed her lover-princeling would
As strangely go, were she not soon restored.—
As so he did:—That airy penalty
The jocund Fates provide our love-lorn wights
In this glad island: So for thrice three nights
They spun the prince his line and marked him pay
It out (despite all warnings of his doom)
In fast and sleepless search for her—and *then*
They tripped his fumbling feet and he fell—UP!—
Up!—as 'tis writ—sheer past Heaven's flinching walls
And topmost cornices.—Up—up and on!—
And, it is grimly guessed of those who thus
For such a term bemoan an absent love,
And so fall *up*wise, they must needs fall on—
And on and on—and on—and on—and on!
Ha! ha!

JUCKLET

Quahh! but the prince's holden breath
Must ache his throat by this! But, O my Queen,
What of the princess?—and—

CRESTILLOMEEM

The princess?—Ay—
The princess! Ay, she went—she strangely went!
And when the dainty vagrant came not back—
Both sire and son in apprehensive throes
Of royal grief—the very Throne befogged
In sighs and tears!—when all hope waned at last,
And all the spies of Spirkland, in her quest,
Came straggling empty-handed home again,—
Why, then the wise King sleeved his rainy eyes
And sagely thought the pretty princess had
Strayed to the island's edge and tumbled off.
I could have set his mind at ease on that—
I could have told him,—*yea*, she tumbled off—
I tumbled her!—and tumbled her so plump,
She tumbled in an under-island, then
Just slow-unmooring from our own and poised
For unknown voyagings of flight afar
And all remote of latitudes of ours.—
Ay, into that land I tumbled her from which
But one charm known to art can tumble her
Back into this,—and *that* charm (guilt be praised!)
Is lodged not in the wit nor the desire
Of my rare lore.

JUCKLET

Thereinasmuch find joy!
But dost thou know that rumors flutter now
Among thy subjects of thy sorceries?—
The art being *banned*, thou knowest; or, unhoused,
Is unleashed pitilessly by the grim,

Facetious body of the dridular
Upon the one who fain had loosed the curse
On others.—An my counsel be worth aught,
Then have a care thy spells do not revert
Upon thyself, nor yet mine own poor hulk
O' fearsomeness!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Ha! ha! No vaguest need
Of apprehension there!—While Krung remains—

[*She abruptly pauses—startled first, then listening curiously and with awed interest. Voice of exquisite melodiousness and fervor heard singing.*]

VOICE

When kings are kings, and kings are men—
And the lonesome rain is raining!—
O who shall rule from the red throne then,
And who shall covet the scepter when—
When the winds are all complaining?

When men are men, and men are kings—
And the lonesome rain is raining!—
O who shall list as the minstrel sings
Of the crown's fiat, or the signet-ring's,
When the winds are all complaining?

CRESTILLOMEEM

Whence flows such sweetness, and what voice is that?

JUCKLET

The voice of Spraivoll, an mine ears be whet
And honéd o' late honeyéd memories
Behaunting the deserted purlieus of
The court.

CRESTILLOMEEM

And who is Spraivoll, and what song
Is that besung so blinding exquisite
Of cadenced mystery?

JUCKLET

Spraivoll—O Queen,—
Spraivoll The Tune-Fool is she fitly named
By those who meet her ere the day long wanes
And naught but janiteering sparsely frets
The cushioned silences and stagnant dusts
Indifferently resuscitated by
The drowsy varlets in mock servitude
Of so refurbishing the royal halls;
She cometh, alien, from Wunkland—so
Hath she deposed to divers questioners
Who have been smitten of her voice—as rich
In melody as she is poor in mind.
She hath been roosting, pitied of the hinds
And scullions, round about the palace here
For half a node.

CRESTILLOMEEM

And pray, where is she perched—
This wild-bird woman with her wondrous throat?

JUCKLET

Under some dingy cornice, like enough—
Though *wild-bird* she is not, being plumèd in,
Not feathers, but one fustioned stole—the like
Of which so shameth her fair face one needs
Must swear some lusty oaths, but that they shape
Themselves full gentlewise in mildest prayer:—
Not *wild-bird;*—nay, nor *woman*—though, in truth,
She ith a licensed idiot, and drifts
About, as restless and as useless, too,
As any lazy breeze in summer-time.
I'll call her forth to greet your Majesty.
Ho! Spraivoll! Ho! my twittering birdster, flit
Thou hither.

[*Enter* SPRAIVOLL—*from behind group of statuary—singing.*]

SPRAIVOLL

Ting-aling! Ling-ting! Tingle-tee!
The moon spins round and round for me!
Wind it up with a golden key.
Ting-aling! Ling-ting! Tingle-tee!

CRESTILLOMEEM

Who art thou, and what the strange
Elusive beauty and intent of thy
Sweet song? What singest thou, vague, mystic-bird—
What doth the Tune-Fool sing? Ay, sing me what.

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

What sings the breene on the wertling-vine,
And the tweck on the bamner-stem?
Their song, to me, is the same as mine,
As mine is the same to them—to them—
As mine is the same to them.

In star-starved glooms where the plustre looms
With its slender boughs above,
Their song sprays down with the fragrant blooms.
And the song they sing is love—is love—
And the song they sing is love.

JUCKLET

Your Majesty may be surprised somewhat,
But Spraivoll can not talk,—her only mode
Of speech is melody; and thou might'st put
The dowered fool a thousand queries, and,
In like return, receive a thousand songs,
All set to different tunes—as full of naught
As space is full of emptiness.

CRESTILLOMEEM

A fool?—
And with a gift so all-divine!—A fool?

JUCKLET

Ay, warranted!—The Flying Islands all
Might flock in mighty counsel—moult, and shake
Their loosened feathers, and sort every tuft,

Nor ever most minutely quarry there
One other Spraivoll, itching with her voice
Such favored spot of cuticle as she
Alone selects here in our blissful realm.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Out, jester, on thy cumbrous wordiness!
Come hither, Tune-Fool, and be not afraid,
For I like fools so well I married one:
And since thou art a *Queen* of fools, and he
A *King,* why, I've a mind to bring ye two
Together in some wise. Canst use thy song
All times in such entrancing spirit one
Who lists must so needs list, e'en though the song
Go on unceasingly indefinite?

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

If one should ask me for a song,
  Then I should answer, and my tongue
Would twitter, trill and troll along
  Until the song were done.

Or should one ask me for my tongue,
  And I should answer with a song,
I'd trill it till the song were sung,
  And troll it all along.

CRESTILLOMEEM

Thou art indeed a fool, and one, I think,
To serve my present purposes. Give ear.—

And Jucklet, thou, go to the King and bide
His waking: then repeat these words:—"*The Queen*
Impatiently awaits his Majesty,
And craves his presence in the Tower of Stars,
That she may there express full tenderly
Her great solicitude." And *then,* end thus,—
"*So much she bade, and drooped her glowing face*
Deep in the showerings of her golden hair,
And with a flashing gesture of her arm
Turned all the moonlight pallid, saying, 'Haste!'"

JUCKLET

And would it not be well to hang a pearl
Or twain upon thy silken lashes?

CRESTILLOMEEM

Go!

JUCKLET [*Exit, singing*]

This lovely husband's loyal breast
Heaved only as she might suggest,—
To every whimsy she expressed
He proudly bowed and acquiesced.
He plotted with her, blithe and gay—
In no flirtation said her nay,—
He even took her to the play,
Excused himself and came away.

CRESTILLOMEEM [*To Spraivoll*]

Now, Tune-Fool, *junior,* let me theme *thee* for
A song:—An Empress once, with angel in
Her face and devil in her heart, had wish
To breed confusion to her sovereign lord,
And work the downfall of his haughty son—
The issue of a former marriage—who
Bellowsed her hatred to the whitest heat,
For that her own son, by a former lord,
Was born a hideous dwarf, and reared aside
From the sire's knowing or his princely own—
That *none,* in sooth, might ever chance to guess
The hapless mother of the hapless child.
The Fiends that scar her thus, protect her still
With outward beauty of both face and form.—
It so is written, and so must remain
Till magic greater than their own is found
To hurl against her. So is she secure
And proof above all fear. Now, listen well!—
Her present lord is haunted with a dream,
That he is soon to pass, and so prepares
(*All havoc hath been wrangled with the drugs!*)
The Throne for the ascension of the son,
His cursèd heir, who still doth baffle all
Her arts against him, e'en as though he were
Protected by a skill beyond her own.
Soh! she, the Queen, doth rule the King in all
Save this affectionate perversity
Of favor for the son whom he would raise
To his own place.—And but for this the King
Long since had tasted death and kissed his fate

As one might kiss a bride! But so his Queen
Must needs withhold, not deal, the final blow,
She yet doth bind him, spelled, still trusting her;
And, by her craft and wanton flatteries,
Doth sway his love to every purpose but
The one most coveted.—And for this end
She would make use of thee;—and if thou dost
Her will, as her good pleasure shall direct,
Why, thou shalt sing at court, in silken tire,
Thy brow bound with wild diamonds, and thy hair
Sown with such gems as laugh hysteric lights
From glittering quespar, guenk and plennocynth,—
Ay, even panoplied as might the fair
Form of a very princess be, thy voice
Shall woo the echoes of the listening Throne.

SPRAIVOLL [*Crooning abstractedly*]

And O! shall one—high brother of the air,
In deeps of space—shall he have dream as fair?—
And shall that dream be this?—In some strange place
Of long-lost lands he finds her waiting face—
Comes marvelling upon it, unaware,
Set moonwise in the midnight of her hair,
And is behaunted with old nights of May,
So his glad lips do purl a roundelay
Purloinèd from the echo-triller's beak,
Seen keenly notching at some star's blanch cheek
With its ecstatic twitterings, through dusk
And sheen of dewy boughs of bloom and musk.
For him, Love, light again the eyes of her
That show nor tears nor laughter nor surprise—

For him undim their glamour and the blur
Of dreams drawn from the depths of deepest skies.
He doth not know if any lily blows
As fair of feature, nor of any rose.

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Aside*]

O this weird woman! she doth drug mine ears
With her uncanny sumptuousness of song!
[*To Spraivoll.*] Nay, Nay! Give o'er thy tuneful maunderings
And mark me further, Tune-Fool—ay, and well:—
At present doth the King lie in a sleep
Drug-wrought and deep as death—the after-phase
Of an unconscious state, in which each act
Of his throughout his waking hours is so
Rehearsed, in manner, motion, deed and word,
Her spies (the Queen's) that watch him, serving there
As guardians o'er his royal slumbers, may
Inform her of her lord's most secret thought.
And lo, her plans have ripened even now
Till, *should he come upon his Throne to-night,*
Where eagerly his counsellors will bide
His coming,—she, the Queen, hath reason to
Suspect her long-designèd purposes
May fall in jeopardy;—but if he *fail,*
Through *any* means, to lend his presence there,—
Then, by a wheedled mandate, *is his Queen*
Empowered with all Sovereignty to reign
And work the royal purposes instead.
Therefore, the Queen hath set an interview—
A conference to be holden with the King,

Which is ordained to fall on noon to-night,
Twelve star-twirls ere the nick the Throne convenes.—
And with her thou shalt go, and bide in wait
Until she signal thee to sing: and then
Shalt thou so work upon his mellow mood
With that un-Spirkly magic of thy voice—
So all bedaze his waking thought with dreams,—
The Queen may, all unnoticed, slip away,
And leave thee singing to a throneless King.

SPRATVOLL [*Singing*]

And who shall sing for the haughty son
While the good King droops his head?—
And will he dream, when the song is done,
That a princess fair lies dead?

CRESTILLOMEEM

The haughty son hath found *his* "Song"—*sweet curse!*—
And may she sing his everlasting dirge!
She comes from that near-floating land of thine,
Naming herself a princess of that realm
So strangely peopled we would fain evade
All mergence, and remain as strange to them
As they to us. No less this Dwainie hath
Most sinuously writhed and lithed her way
Into court-favor here—hath glidden past
The King's enchanted sight and shocked herself
Within the very altars of his house—
His line—his blood—his very life: AMPHISÆ!
Not any Spirkland gentlemaiden might
Aspire so high as *she* hath dared to dare!

For she, with her fair skin and finer ways,
And beauty second only to the Queen's,
Hath caught the prince betwixt her mellow palms
And stroked him flutterless. Didst ever thou
In thy land hear of *Dwainie of the Wunks?*

SPRAIVOLL [*Singing*]

Ay, Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The lurloo ever sings,
A tremor in his flossy crest
And in his glossy wings.
And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The winno-welvers call;—
But Dwainie hides in Spirkland
And answers not at all.

The teeper twitters Dwainie!—
The tcheucker on his spray
Teeters up and down the wind
And will not fly away:
And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The drowsy oovers drawl;—
But Dwainie hides in Spirkland
And answers not at all.

O Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The breezes hold their breath—
The stars are pale as blossoms,
And the night as still as death:
And Dwainie!—My Dwainie!
The fainting echoes fall;—
But Dwainie hides in Spirkland
And answers not at all.

CRESTILLOMEEM

A melody ecstatic! and—thy words,
Although so meaningless, seem something more—
A vague and shadowy something, ever-like
That maketh one to shiver over-chilled
With curious, creeping sweetnesses of pain
And catching breaths that flutter tremulous
With sighs that dry the throat unduly—
But save thy music! Come! that I may make
Thee ready for thy royal audience [*Exeunt*]

END ACT I

ACT II

SCENE I. *A garden of* KRUNCIS *Palace screened from the moon with netted glass-vines and luminous zhoomer-boughs, all glimmering lighted with star-flakes. An arbor, near within it a table spread with a repast—two seats, drawn either side. A glowing fountain, at marge of which* AMPHINE *and* CRESTILLOMEEM *a trentoraine.*

AMPHINE [*Improvising*]

Ah, help me! but her face and brow
Are lovelier than lilies are
Beneath the light of moon and star
That smile as they are smiling now—
White lilies in a pallid swoon
Of sweetest white beneath the moon—

White lilies in a flood of bright
Pure lucidness of liquid-light
Cascading down some plenilune
When all the azure overhead
Blooms like a dazzling daisy-bed.—
So luminous her face and brow
The luster of their glory, shed
In memory, even, blinds me now.

[*Plaintively addressing instrument*]

O warbling strand of silver, where, O where
Hast thou unravelled that sweet voice of thine
And left its silken murmurs quavering
In limp thrills of delight? O golden wire,
Where hast thou spilled thy precious twinkerings?—
What thirsty ear hath drained thy melody,
And left me but a wild, delirious drop
To tincture all my soul with vain desire?

[*Improvising*]

Her face—her brow—her hair unfurled!—
And O the oval chin below,
Carved, like a cunning cameo,
With one exquisite dimple, swirled
With swimming shine and shade, and whirled
The daintiest vortex poets know—
The sweetest whirlpool ever twirled
By Cupid's finger-tip,—and so,
The deadliest maelstrom in the world.

[*Pauses.—Enter* DWAINIE, *behind, in upper bower, unperceived.*]

AMPHINE [*Again addressing instrument*]

O Trentoraine! how like an emptièd vase
Thou art—whose clustering blooms of song have drooped
And faded, one by one, and fallen away
And left to me but dry and tuneless stems
And crisp and withered tendrils of a voice
Whose thrilling tone, now like a throttled sound,
Lies stifled, faint, and gasping all in vain
For utterance.

[*Again improvising*]

And O mad wars of blinding blurs
And flashings of lance-blades of light,
Whet glitteringly athwart the sight
That dares confront those eyes of hers!
Let any dewdrop soak the hue
Of any violet through and through,
And then be colorless and dull,
Compared with eyes so beautiful!
I swear ye that her eyes be bright
As noonday, yet as dark as night—
As bright as be the burnished bars
Of rainbows set in sunny skies,
And yet as deep and dark, her eyes,
And lustrous black as blown-out stars.

[*Pauses*—DWAINIE *still unperceived, radiantly smiling and wafting kisses down from trellis-window above.*]

AMPHINE [*Again to instrument*]

O empty husk of song!
If deep within my heart the music thou
Hast stored away might find an issuance,
A fount of limpid laughter would leap up
And gurgle from my lips, and all the winds
Would revel with it, riotous with joy;
And Dwainie, in her beauty, would lean o'er
The battlements of night, and, like the moon,
The glory of her face would light the world—
For I would sing of love.

DWAINIE

And she would hear,—
And, reaching overhead among the stars,
Would scatter them like daisies at thy feet.

AMPHINE

O voice, where art thou floating on the air?—
O Seraph-soul, where art thou hovering?

DWAINIE

I hover in the zephyr of thy sighs,
And tremble lest thy love for me shall fail
To buoy me thus forever on the breath
Of such a dream as Heaven envies.

AMPHINE

Ah!

[*Turning, discovers* DWAINIE—*she feigning, still, invisibility, while he, with lifted eyes and wistful gaze, preludes with instrument—then sings.*]

Linger, my Dwainie! Dwainie, lily-fair,
Stay yet thy step upon the casement-stair—
Poised be thy slipper tip as is the tine
Of some still star.—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine,
Yet linger—linger there!

Thy face, O Dwainie, lily-pure and fair,
Gleams i' the dusk, as in thy dusky hair
The moony zhoomer glimmers, or the shine
Of thy swift smile.—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine,
Yet linger—linger there!

With lifted wrist, whereround the laughing air
Hath blown a mist of lawn and clasped it there,
Waft finger-thipt adieus that spray the wine
Of thy waste kisses to'rd me, Dwainie mine—
Yet linger—linger there!

What unloosed splendor is there may compare
With thy hand's unfurled glory, anywhere?
What glint of dazzling dew or jewel fine
May mate thine eyes?—Ah, Dwainie—Dwainie mine!
Yet linger—linger there!

My soul confronts thee: On thy brow and hair
It lays its tenderness like palms of prayer—
It touches sacredly those lips of thine
And swoons across thy spirit, Dwainie mine,
The while thou lingerest there.

[*Drops trentoraine, and, with open arms, gazes yearningly on* DWAINIE.]

DWAINIE [*Raptly*]

Thy words do wing my being dovewise!

AMPHINE

Then,
Thou lovest!—O my homing dove, veer down
And nestle in the warm home of my breast!
So empty are mine arms, so full my heart,
The one must hold thee, or the other burst.

DWAINIE [*Throwing herself in his embrace*]

Æo's own hand methinks hath flung me here:
O hold me that He may not pluck me back!

AMPHINE

So closely will I hold thee that not e'en
The hand of death shall separate us.

DWAINIE

So
May sweet death find us, then, that, woven thus
In the corollo of a ripe caress,
We may drop lightly, like twin plustre-buds,
On Heaven's star-strewn lawn.

AMPHINE

So do I pray.
But tell me, tender heart, an thou dost love,
Where hast thou loitered for so long?—for thou
Didst promise tryst here with me earlier by

Some several layodemes which I have told
Full chafingly against my finger-tips
Till the full complement, save three, are ranged
Thy pitiless accusers, claiming, each,
So many as their joinèd number be
Shalt thou so many times lift up thy lips
For mine's most lingering forgiveness.
So, save thee, O my Sweet! and rest thee. I
Have ordered merl and viands to be brought
For our refreshment here, where, thus alone,
I may sip words with thee as well as wine.
Why hast thou kept me so athirst?—Why, I
Am jealous of the flattered solitudes
In which thou walkest. [*They sit at table.*]

DWAINIE

Nay, I will not tell,
Since, an I yielded, countless questions, like
In idlest worth, would waste our interview
In speculations vain.—Let this suffice:—
I stayed to talk with one whom, long ago,
I met and knew, and grew to love, forsooth,
In dreamy Wunkland.—Talked of mellow nights,
And long, long hours of golden olden times
When girlish happiness locked hands with me
And we went spinning round, with naked feet
In swaths of bruisèd roses ankle-deep;
When laughter rang unsilenced, unrebuked,
And prayers went unremembered, oozing clean
From the drowsed memory, as from the eyes
The pure, sweet mother-face that bent above

Glimmered and wavered, blurred, bent closer still
A timeless instant, like a shadowy flame,
Then flickered tremulously o'er the brow
And went out in a kiss.

AMPHINE [*Kissing her*]

Not like to *this!*
O blessèd lips whose kiss alone may be
Sweeter than their sweet speech! Speak on, and say
Of what else talked thou and thy friend?

DWAINIE

We talked
Of all the past, ah me! and all the friends
That now await my coming. And we talked
Of O so many things—so many things—
That I but blend them all with dreams of when,
With thy warm hand clasped close in this of mine,
We cross the floating bridge that soon again
Will span the all-unfathomable gulfs
Of nether air betwixt this isle of strife
And my most glorious realm of changeless peace,
Where summer night reigns ever and the moon
Hangs ever ripe and lush with radiance
Above a land where roses float on wings
And fan their fragrance out so lavishly
That Heaven hath hint of it, and oft therefrom
Sends down to us across the odorous seas
Strange argosies of interchanging bud
And blossom, spice and balm.—Sweet—sweet
Beyond all art and wit of uttering.

AMPHINE

O Empress of my listening Soul, speak on,
And tell me all of that rare land of thine!—
For even though I reigned a peerless king
Within mine own, methinks I could fling down
My scepter, signet, crown and royal might,
And so fare down the thornèd path of life
If at its dwindling end my feet might touch
Upon the shores of such a land as thou
Dost paint for me—*thy* realm! Tell on of it—
And tell me if thy sister-woman there
Is like to thee—Yet nay! for an thou didst,
These eyes would lose all speech of sight
And call not back to thine their utter love.
But tell me of thy brothers.—Are they great,
And can they grapple Æo's arguments
Beyond our skill? or wrest a purpose from
The pink side of the moon at Darsten-tide?
Or cipher out the problem of blind stars,
That ever still do safely grope their way
Among the thronging constellations?

DWAINIE

Ay!

Ay, they have leaped all earthland barriers
In mine own isle of wisdom-working Wunks:—
'Twas Wunkland's son that voyaged round the moon
And moored his bark within the molten bays
Of bubbling silver: And 'twas Wunkland's son
That talked with Mars—unbuckled Saturn's belt
And tightened it in squeezure of such facts

Therefrom as even *he* dare not disclose
In full till all his followers, as himself,
Have grown them wings, and gat them beaks and claws,
With plumage all bescienced to withstand
All tensest flames—glaze-throated, too, and lung'd
To swallow fiercest-spurted jets and cores
Of embered and unquenchable white heat:
'Twas Wunkland's son that alchemized the dews
And bred all colored grasses that he wist—
Divorced the airs and mists and caught the trick
Of azure-tinting earth as well as sky:
'Twas Wunkland's son that bent the rainbow straight
And walked it like a street, and so returned
To tell us it was made of hammered shine,
Inlaid with strips of selvage from the sun
And burnished with the rust of rotten stars:
'Twas Wunkland's son that comprehended first
All grosser things, and took our worlds apart
And oiled their works with theories that clicked
In glib articulation with the pulse
And palpitation of the systemed facts.—
And, circling ever round the farthest reach
Of the remotest welkin of all truths,
We stint not our investigations to
Our worlds only, but query still beyond.—
For now our goolores say, below these isles
A million million miles, are *other* worlds—
Not like to ours, but *round*, as bubbles are,
And, like them, ever reeling on through space,
And anchorless through all eternity;—
Not like to ours, for our isles, as they note,
Are living things that fly about at night,

And soar above and cling, throughout the day,
Like bats, beneath the bent sills of the skies:
And I myself have heard, at dawn of moon,
A liquid music filtered through my dreams,
As though 'twere myriads of sweet voices, pent
In some o'erhanging realm, had spilled themselves
In streams of melody that trickled through
The chinks and crannies of a crystal pave,
Until the wasted juice of harmony,
Slow-leaking o'er my senses, laved my soul
In ecstasy divine: And afferhaiks,
Who scour our coasts on missions for the King,
Declare our island's shape is like the zhibb's
When lolling in a trance upon the air
With open wings upslant and motionless.
O such a land it is—so all complete
In all wise habitants, and knowledge, lore,
Arts, sciences, perfected government
And kingly wisdom, worth and majesty—
And *Art*—ineffably above all else:—
The art of the *Romancer*,—fabulous
Beyond the miracles of strangest fact;
The art of *Poesy*,—the sanest soul
Is made mad with its uttering; the art
Of *Music*,—words may not e'en whimper what
The jewel-sounds of song yield to the sense;
And, last,—the art of *Knowing what to Know*,
And how to zoon straight to'rd it like a bee,
Draining or song or poem as it brims
And over-runs with raciest spirit-dew.—
And, *after*,—chaos all to sense like thine,
Till there, translated, thou shalt know as I. . . .

So furnished forth in all things lovable
Is my Land-Wondrous—ay, and thine to be,—
O Amphine, love of mine, it lacks but thy
Sweet presence to make it a paradise!
[*Takes up trentoraine.*]
And shall I tell thee of the home that waits
For thy glad coming, Amphine?—Listen, then!

CHANT-RECITATIVE

A palace veiled in a glimmering dusk;
Warm breaths of a tropic air,
Drugged with the odorous marzhoo's musk
And the sumptuous cyncotwaire—
Where the trembling hands of the lilwing's leaves
The winds caress and fawn,
While the dreamy starlight idly weaves
Designs for the damask lawn.

Densed in the depths of a dim eclipse
Of palms, in a flowery space,
A fountain leaps from the marble lips
Of a girl, with a golden vase
Held atip on a curving wrist,
Drinking the drops that glance
Laughingly in the glittering mist
Of her crystal utterance.

Archways looped o'er blooming walks
That lead through gleaming halls;
And balconies where the word-bird talks
To the tittering waterfalls:

And casements, gauzed with the filmy sheen
Of a lace that sifts the sight
Through a ghost of bloom on the haunted screen
That drips with the dews of light.

Weird, pale shapes of sculptured stone,—
With marble nymphs agaze
Ever in fonts of amber, sown
With seeds of gold and sprays
Of emerald mosses, ever drowned,
Where glimpses of shell and gem
Peer from the depths as round and round
The nautilus nods at them.

Faces blurred in a mazy dance,
With a music, wild and sweet,
Spinning the threads of the mad romance
That tangles the waltzers' feet:
Twining arms, and warm, swift throbs
That pulse to the melody,
Till the soul of the dancer dips and bobs
In the wells of ecstasy.

Eyes that melt in a quivering ore
Of love, and the molten kiss
Jetted forth of the hearts that pour
Their blood in the moulds of bliss —
Till, worn to a languor slumber-deep,
The soul of the dreamer lifts
A silken sail on the gulfs of sleep,
And into the darkness drifts.

[*The instrument falls from her hands—*ARTHUR, *in access of passionate delight, embraces her.*]

AMPHINE

Thou art not all of earth, O angel one!
Nor do I far miswonder me an thou
Hast peered above the very walls of Heaven!
What hast thou seen there?—Didst on Æo bask
Thine eyes and clothe Him with new splendorings?
And strove He to fling back as bright a smile
As thine, the while He beckoned thee within?
And, tell me, didst thou meet an angel there
A-linger at the gates, nor entering
Till I, her brother, joined her?

DWAINIE

Why, hast thou
A sister dead?—Truth, I have heard of one
Long lost to thee—not dead?

AMPHINE

Of her I speak,—
And dead, although we know not certainly,
We moan us ever it must needs be death
Only could hold her from us such long term
Of changeless yearning for her glad return.
She strayed away from us long, long ago.—
O and our memories!—Her wandering eyes
That seemed as though they ever looked on things
We might not see—as haply so they did,—
For she went from us, all so suddenly—
So strangely vanished, leaving never trace
Of her outgoing, that I ofttimes think

Her rapt eyes fell along some certain path
Of special glory paven for her feet,
And fashioned of Æo's supreme desire
That she might bend her steps therein and so
Reach Him again, unseen of our mere eyes.
My sweet, sweet sister!—lost to brother—sire—
And, to *her* heart, one dearer than all else,—
Her *lover*—lost indeed!

DWAINIE

Nay, do not grieve
Thee thus, O loving heart! Thy sister yet
May come to thee in some glad way the Fates
Are fashioning the while thy tear-drops fall!
So calm thee, while I speak of thine own self.—
For I have listened to a whistling bird
That pipes of waiting danger. Didst thou note
No strange behavior of thy sire of late?

AMPHINE

Ay, he is silent, and he walks as one
In some fixed melancholy, or as one
Half waking.—Even his worshipped books seem now
But things on shelves.

DWAINIE

And doth he counsel not
With thee in any wise pertaining to
His ailings, or of matters looking toward
His future purposes or his intents

Regarding thine own future fortunings
And his desires and interests therein?
What bearing hath he shown of late toward thee
By which thou might'st beframe some estimate
Of his mind's placid flow or turbulent?
And hath he not so spoken thee at times
Thou hast been 'wildered of his words, or grieved
Of his strange manner?

AMPHINE

Once he stayed me on
The palace-stair and whispered, "Lo, my son,
Thy young reign draweth nigh—prepare!"—So passed
And vanished as a wraith, so wan he was!

DWAINIE

And didst thou never reason on this thing,
Nor ask thyself what dims thy father's eye
And makes a brooding shadow of his form?

AMPHINE

Why, there's a household rumor that he dreams
Death fareth ever at his side, and soon
Shall signal him away.—But *Jucklet* saith
Crestillomeem hath said *the leeches* say
There is no cause for serious concern;
And thus am I assured 'tis nothing more
Than childish fancy of mine aging sire,—
And so, as now, I laugh, full reverently,
And marvel, as I mark his shuffling gait,

And his bestrangered air and murmurous lips,
As by he glideth to and fro, ha! ha!
Ho! ho!—I laugh me many, many times—
Mind, thou, 'tis *reverently* I laugh—ha! ha!—
And wonder, as he glideth ghostly-wise,
If ever *I* shall waver as I walk,
And stumble o'er my beard, and knit my brows,
And o'er the dull mosaics of the pave
Play chequers with mine eyes! Ha! ha!

DWAINIE [*Aside*]

How dare—
How dare I tell him? Yet I must—I must!

AMPHINE

Why, art *thou*, too, grown childish, that thou canst
Find thee waste pleasure talking to thyself
And staring frowningly with eyes whose smiles
I need so much?

DWAINIE

Nay, rather say, their tears,
Poor thoughtless Prince! [*Aside.*] (My magic even now
Forecasts his kingly sire's near happening
Of nameless hurt and ache and awful stress
Of agony supreme, when he shall stare
The stark truth in the face!)

AMPHINE

What meanest thou?

DWAINIE

What mean I but thy welfare? Why, I mean,
One hour agone, the Queen, thy mother—

AMPHINE

Nay,
Say only "Queen"!

DWAINIE

—The Queen, one hour agone—
As so I learned from source I need not say—
Sent message craving audience with the King
At noon to-night, within the Tower of Stars.—
Thou knowest, only brief space following
The time of her pent session thereto set
In secret with the King alone, *the Throne*
Is set, too, to convene; and that *the King*
Hath lent his seal unto a mandate that,
Should he withhold his presence there, the Queen
Shall be empowered to preside—to reign—
Solely endowed to work the royal will
In lieu of the good King. Now, therefore, I
Have been advised that she, the Queen, by craft
Connives to hold him absent purposely,
That she may claim the vacancy—for what
Covert design I know not, but I know
It augurs peril to ye both, as to
The Throne's own perpetuity. [*Aside.*] (Again
My magic gives me vision terrible:—
The Sorceress' legions balk mine own.—The King
Still hers, yet wavering. O save the King,
Thou Æo!—Render him to us!)

AMPHINE

I feel
Thou speakest truth: and yet how know'st thou this?

DWAINIE

Ask me not that; my lips are welded close.—
And, *more*,—since I have dared to speak, and thou
To listen,—Jucklet is accessory,
And even now is plotting for thy fall.
But, Passion of my Soul! think not of me,—
For nothing but sheer magic may avail
To work me harm;—but look thou to thyself!
For thou art blameless cause of all the hate
That rankleth in the bosom of the Queen.
So have thine eyes unslumbered ever, that
No step may steal behind thee—for in this
Unlooked-of way thine enemy will come:
This much I know, but for what fell intent
Dare not surmise.—*So look thou, night and day,*
That none may skulk upon thee in this wise
Of dastardly attack. [*Aside.*] (Ha! Sorceress!
Thou palest, tossing wild and wantonly
The smothering golden tempest of thy hair.—
What! lying eyes! *ye* dare to utter *tears?*
Help! help! Yield us the King!)

AMPHINE

And thou, O sweet!
How art thou guarded and what shield is thine
Of safety?

DWAINIE

Fear not thou for me at all.—
Possessed am I of wondrous sorcery—
The gift of Holy Magi at my birth:—
Mine enemy must *front* me in assault
And must with mummery of speech assail,
And I will know him in first utterance,—
And so may thus disarm him, though he be
A giant thrice in vasty form and force.
[*Singing heard.*]
But, list! what wandering minstrel cometh here
In the young night?

VOICE [*In distance—singing*]

The drowsy eyes of the stars grow dim;
The wamboo roosts on the rainbow's rim,
And the moon is a ghost of shine:
The soothing song of the crule is done,
But the song of love is a soother one,
And the song of love is mine.
Then, wake! O wake!
For the sweet song's sake,
Nor let my heart
With the morning break!

AMPHINE

Some serenader. Hist!
What meaneth he so early, and what thus
Within the palace garden-close? Quick; here!
He neareth! Soh! Let us conceal ourselves
And mark his action, wholly unobserved.

[AMPHINE *and* DWAINIE *enter bower*]

VOICE [*Drawing nearer*]

The mist of the morning, chill and gray,
Wraps the night in a shroud of spray:
The sun is a crimson blot:
The moon fades fast, and the stars take wing;
The comet's tail is a fleeting thing—
But the tale of love is not.
Then, wake! O wake!
For the sweet song's sake,
Nor let my heart
With the morning break!

[*Enter* JUCKLET]

JUCKLET

Eex! what a sumptuous darkness is the Night—
How rich and deep and suave and velvety
Its lovely blackness to a soul like mine!
Ah, Night! thou densest of all mysteries—
Thou eeriest of unfathomable delights,
Whose soundless sheer inscrutability
Is fascination's own ethereal self,
Unseen, and yet embodied—palpable,—
An essence, yet a form of stableness
That stays me—weighs me, as a giant palm
Were laid on either shoulder.—Peace! I cease
Even to strive to grope one further pace,
But stand uncovered and with lifted face.
O but a glamour of inward light
Hath smitten the eyes of my soul to-night!

Groping here in the garden-land,
I feel my fancy's outheld hand
Touch the rim of a realm that seems
Like an isle of bloom in a sea of dreams:
I stand mazed, dazed and alone—alone!—
My heart beats on in an undertone,
And I lean and listen long, and long,
And I hold my breath as I hear again
The chords of a long-dead trentoraine
And the wraith of an old love-song.
Low to myself am I whispering:—

Glad am I, and the Night knows why—
Glad am I that the dream came by
And found me here as of old when I
Was a ruler and a king.

DWAINIE [*To Amphine*]

What gentle little monster is this dwarf—
Surely not Jucklet of the court?

AMPHINE [*Ironically*]

Ay, ay!
But he'll *ungentle* an thy woman's-heart
Yield him but space. Listen: he mouths again.

JUCKLET

It was an age ago—an age
Turned down in life like a folded page.—
See where the volume falls apart,
And the faded bookmark—'tis my heart,—

Nor mine alone, but another knit
So cunningly in the love of it
That you must look, with a shaking head,
Nor know the quick one from the dead.
Ah! what a broad and sea-like lawn
Is the field of love they bloom upon!—
Waves of its violet-velvet grass
Billowing, with the winds that pass,
And breaking in a snow-white foam
Of lily-crests on the shores of home.
Low to myself am I whispering:—

Glad am I, and the Night knows why—
Glad am I that the dream came by
And found me here as of old when I
Was a ruler and a king.

[*Abruptly breaking into impassioned vocal burst*]

Song

Fold me away in your arms, O Night—
Night, my Night, with your rich black hair!—
Tumble it down till my yearning sight
And my unkissed lips are hidden quite
And my heart is havened there.—
Under that mystical dark despair—
Under your rich black hair.

Oft have I looked in your eyes, O Night—
Night, my Night, with your rich black hair!—
Looked in your eyes 'till my face waned white

And my heart laid hold of a mad delight
That moaned as I held it there
Under the deeps of that dark despair—
Under your rich black hair.

Just for a kiss of your mouth, O Night—
Night, my Night, with your rich black hair!—
Lo! will I wait as a dead man might
Wait for the Judgment's dawning light,
With my lips in a frozen prayer—
Under this lovable dark despair—
Under your rich black hair.

[*With swift change to mood of utter gayety*]

Ho! ho! what will my dainty mistress say
When I shall stand knee-deep in the wet grass
Beneath her lattice, and with upturned eyes
And tongue out-lolling like the clapper of
A bell, outpour her *that?* I wonder now
If she will not put up her finger thus,
And say, "Hist! heart of mine! the angels call
To thee!" Ho! ho! Or will her blushing face
Light up her dim boudoir and, from her glass,
Flare back to her a flame upsprouting from
The hot-cored socket of a soul whose light
She thought long since had guttered out?—Ho! ho!
Or, haply, will she chastely bend above—
A Parian phantomette, with head atip
And twinkling fingers dusting down the dews
That glitter on the tarapyzma-vines
That riot round her casement—gathering

Lush blooms to pelt me with while I below
All winkingly await the fragrant shower?
Ho! ho! how jolly is this thing of love!
But how much richer, rarer, jollier
Than all the loves is this rare love of mine!
Why, my sweet Princess doth not even dream
I *am* her lover,—for, to here confess,
I have a way of wooing all mine own,
And waste scant speech in creamy compliment
And courtesies all gaumed with winy words.—
In sooth, I do not woo at all—I *win!*
How is it now the old duet doth glide
Itself full ripplingly adown the grooves
Of its quaint melody?—And whoso, by
The *bye,* or by the *way,* or *for the nonce,*
Or, eke ye, *peradventure,* ever durst
Render a duet singly but myself?

[*Singing—with grotesque mimicry of two voices*]

JUCKLET'S OSTENSIBLE DUET

How is it you woo?—and now answer me true,—
  How is it you woo and you win?
Why, to answer you true,—the first thing that you do
  Is to simply, my dearest—begin.

But how can I begin to woo or to win
  When I don't know a Win from a Woo?
Why, cover your chin with your fan or your fin,
  And I'll introduce them to you.

But what if it drew from my parents a view
With my own in no manner akin?
No matter!—your view shall be first of the two,—
So I hasten to usher them in.

Nay, stay! Shall I grin at the Woo or the Win?
And what will he do if I *do?*
Why, the Woo will begin with "How pleasant it's been!"
And the Win with "Delighted with you!"

Then supposing he grew very dear to my view—
I'm speaking, you know, of the Win?
Why, then, you should do what he wanted you to,—
And now is the time to begin.

The time to begin? O then usher him in—
Let him say what he wants me to do.
He is here.—He's a twin of yourself,—I am "Win,"
And you are, my darling, my "Woo"!

[*Capering and courtesying to feigned audience*]

That song I call most sensible nonsense;
And if the fair and peerless Dwainie were
But here, with that sweet voice of hers, to take
The part of "Woo," I'd be the happiest "Win"
On this side of futurity! Ho! ho!

DWAINIE [*Aside to* AMPHINE]

What means he?

AMPHINE

Why, he means that throatless head
Of his needs further chucking down betwixt
His cloven shoulders!

[*Starting forward*—DWAINIE *detaining him*]

DWAINIE

Nay, thou shalt not stir!
See! now the monster hath discovered our
Repast. Hold! Let us mark him further.

JUCKLET [*Archly eying viands*]

What!
A roasted wheffle and a toc-spiced whum,
Tricked with a larvey and a gherghgling's tail!—
And, sprit me! wine enough to swim them in!
Now I should like to put a question to
The *guests;* but as there *are* none, I direct
Mine interrogatory to the host.

[*Bowing to vacancy*]

Am I behind-time?—Then I can but trust
My tardy coming may be overlooked
In my most active effort to regain
A gracious tolerance by service now:—
Directing rapt attention to the fact
That I have brought mine appetite along,
I can but feel, ho! ho! that further words
Would be a waste of speech.

[*Sits at table—pours out wine, drinks and eats voraciously.*]

—There was a time
When I was rather backward in my ways
In courtly company (as though, forsooth,
I felt not, from my very birth, the swish
Of royal blood along my veins, though bred
Amongst the treacled scullions and the thralls
I shot from, like a cork, in youthful years,
Into court-favor by my wit's sheer stress
Of fomentation.—*Pah! the stench o' toil!*)
Ay, somehow, as I think, I've all outgrown
That coarse, nice age, wherein one makes a meal
Of two estardles and a fork of soup.
Hey! sanaloo! Lest my starved stomach stand
Awe-stricken and aghast, with mouth agape
Before the rich profusion of this feast,
I lubricate it with a glass of merl
And coax it on to more familiar terms
Of fellowship with those delectables.

[*Pours wine and holds up goblet with mock courtliness*]

Mine host!—Thou of the viewless presence and
Hush-haunted lip:—Thy most imperial,
Ethereal, and immaterial health!
Live till the sun dries up, and comb thy cares
With star-prongs till the comets fizzle out
And fade away and fail and are no more!

[*Drains and refills goblet*]

And, if thou wilt permit me to observe,—
The gleaming shaft of spirit in this wine
Goes whistling to its mark, and full and fair

Zipps to the target-center of my soul!
Why, now am I the veriest gentleman
That ever buttered woman with a smile,
And let her melt and run and drip and ooze
All over and around a wanton heart!
And if my mistress bent above me now,
In all my hideous deformity,
I think she would look over, as it were,
The hump upon my back, and so forget
The kinks and knuckles of my crooked legs,
In this enchanting smile, she needs must leap,
Love-dazzled, and fall faint and fluttering
Within these yawning, all-devouring arms
Of mine! Ho! ho! And yet Crestillomeem
Would have me blight my dainty Dwainie with
This feather from the Devil's wing!—But I
Am far too full of craft to spoil the eyes
That yet shall pour their love like nectar out
Into mine own,—and I am far too deep
For royal wit to wade my purposes.

DWAINIE [*To* AMPHINE]

What can he mean?

AMPHINE [*Chafing in suppressed frenzy*]

Ha! to rush forward and
Tear out his tongue and slap it in his face!

DWAINIE [*To* AMPHINE]

Nay, nay! Hist what he saith!

JUCKLET

How big a fool—
How all magnificent an idiot
Would I be to blight *her*—(my peerless one!—
My very soul's soul!) as Crestillomeem
Doth instigate me to, for *her* hate's sake—
And inward *jealousy*, as well, belike!—
Wouldst have my Dwainie blinded to my charms—
For charms, good sooth, were every several flaw
Of my malformèd outer-self, compared
With that his Handsomeness the Prince Amphine
Shalt change to at a breath of my puff'd cheek,
E'en were it weedy-bearded at the time
With such a stubble as a huntsman well
Might lose his spaniel in! Ho! ho! Ho! ho!
I fear me, O my coy Crestillomeem,
Thine ancient coquetry doth challenge still
Thine own vain admiration overmuch!
I to crush *her?*—when thou, as certainly,
Hast armed me to smite down the only bar
That lies betwixt her love and mine? Ho! ho!
Hey! but the revel I shall riot in
Above the beauteous Prince, instantuously
Made all abhorrent as a reptiled bulk!
Ho! ho! my princely wooer of the fair
Rare lady of mine own superior choice!
Pah! but my very 'maginings of him
Refinèd to that shamèd, sickening shape,
Do so beloathe me of him there be qualms
Expostulating in my forum now!
Ho! what unprincifying properties
Of medication hath her Majesty

Put in my tender charge! Ho! ho! Ho! ho!
Ah, Dwainie! sweetest sweet! what shock to thee?—
I wonder, when she sees the human toad
Squat at her feet and cock his filmy eyes
Upon her and croak love, if she will not
Call me to tweezer him with two long sticks
And toss him from her path.—O ho! Ho! ho!
Hell bend him o'er some blossom quick, that I
May have one brother in the flesh!

[*Nods drowsily*]

DWAINIE [*To* AMPHINE]

Ha! See!
He groweth drunken.—Soh! Bide yet a spell
And I will vex him with my sorcery:
Then shall we hence,—for lo, the node when all
Our subtlest arts and strategies must needs
Be quickened into acts and swift results.
Now bide thou here, and in mute silence mark
The righteous penalty that hath accrued
Upon that dwarfèd monster.

[*She stands, still in concealment from the dwarf, her tense gaze fixed upon him as though in mute and painful act of incantation.*—JUCKLET *affected drowsily—yawns and mumbles incoherently—stretches, and gradually sinks at full length on the sward.*—DWAINIE *moves forward*—AMPHINE, *following, is about to set foot contemptuously on sleeper's breast, but is caught and held away by* DWAINIE, *who imperiously waves him back, and still, in pantomime,*

commanding, bids him turn and hide his face—AMPHINE *obeying as though unable to do otherwise.* DWAINIE *then unbinds her hair, and throwing it all forward covering her face and bending till it trails the ground, she lifts to the knee her dress, and so walks backward in a circle round the sleeping* JUCKLET, *crooning to herself an incoherent song. Then pausing, letting fall her gown, and rising to full stature, waves her hands above the sleeper's face, and runs to* AMPHINE, *who turns about and gazes on her with new wonderment.*]

DWAINIE. [*To* AMPHINE]

Now shalt thou
Look on such scaith as thou hast never dreamed.

[*As she speaks, half averting her face as with melancholy apprehension, chorus of lugubrious voices heard chanting discordantly.*]

VOICES

When the fat moon smiles,
And the comets kiss,
And the elves of Spirkland flit,
The Whanghoo twunkers
A tune like this,
And the Nightmares champ the bit.

[*As chorus dies away, a comet, freighted with weird shapes, dips from the night and trails near* JUCKLET'S *sleeping figure, while, with attendant goblin-forms, two*

Nightmares, CREECH *and* GRITCHFANG, *alight.—The comet hisses, switches its tail and disappears, while the two goblins hover buzzingly over* JUCKLET, *who starts wide-eyed and stares fixedly at them, with horribly contorted features.*]

CREECH [*To* GRITCHFANG]

Buzz!
Buzz!
Buzz!
Buzz!
Flutter your wings like your grandmother does!
Tuck in your chin and wheel over and *whir-r-r*
Like a dickerbug fast in the web of the wuhrr!
Reel out your tongue, and untangle your toes
And rattle your claws o'er the bridge of his nose;
Tickle his ears with your feathers and fuzz,
And keep up a hum like your grandmother does!

[JUCKLET *moans and clutches at air convulsively.*]

AMPHINE [*Shuddering*]

Most grewsome sight! See how the poor worm writhes!
How must he suffer!

DWAINIE

Ay, but good is meant—
A far voice sings it so.

GRITCHFANG [*To* CREECH]

Let me dive deep in his nostriline caves,
And keep an eye out as to how he behaves:
Fasten him down while I put him to rack—
And don't let him flop from the flat of his back!

[*Shrinks to minute size, while goblin attendants pluck from shrubbery a great lily-shaped flower which they invert funnel-wise, with small end at sleeper's nostrils, hoisting* GRITCHFANG *in at top and jostling shape downward gradually from sight, and—removing flower,—voice of* GRITCHFANG *continues gleefully from within sleeper's head.*]

Ho! I have bored through the floor of his brains,
And set them all writhing with torturous pains;
And I shriek out the prayer, as I whistle and whiz,
I may be the nightmare that my grandmother is!

[*Reappears, through reversal of flower-method, assuming former shape, crosses to* CREECH, *and, joining, the twain dance on sleeper's stomach in broken time to duo.*]

DUO

Whing!
Whang!
So our ancestors sang!
And they guzzled hot blood and blew up with a *bang!*—
But they ever tenaciously clung to the rule
To only blow up in the hull of a fool—

To fizz and explode like a cast-iron toad
In the cavernous depths where his victuals were stowed—
When chances were ripest and thickest and best
To burst every button-hole out of his vest!

[*They pause, float high above, and fusing together into a great square iron weight, drop heavily on chest of sleeper, who moans piteously.*]

AMPHINE [*Hiding his face*]

Ah! take me hence!

[DWAINIE *leads him off, looking backward as she goes and waving her hands imploringly to* CREECH *and* GRITCHFANG, *reassuming former shapes, in ecstasies of insane delight.*]

CREECH [*To* GRITCHFANG]

Zipp!
Zipp!
Zipp!
Zipp!
Sting his tongue raw and unravel his lip!
Grope, on the right, down his windpipe, and squeeze
His liver as dry as a petrified wheeze!

[GRITCHFANG—*as before—shrinks and disappears at sleeper's mouth.*]

Throttle his heart till he's black in the face,
And bury it down in some desolate place

Where only remorse in pent agony lives
To dread the advice that your grandmother gives!

[*The sleeper struggles contortedly, while voice of* GRITCHFANG *calls from within.*]

GRITCHFANG

Ho-ho! I have clambered the rungs of his ribs
And beriddled his lungs into tatters and dribs;
And I turn up the tube of his heart like a hose
And squirt all the blood to the end of his nose!
I stamp on his stomach and caper and prance,
With my tail tossing round like a boomerang-lance!
And thus may success ever crown my intent
To wander the ways that my grandmother went!

[*Reappears, falls hysterically in* CREECH'S *outstretched arms.—Then dance and duo.*]

DUO

Whing!
Whung!
So our ancestors sung!
And they snorted and pawed, and they hissed and they stung,—
Taking special terrific delight in their work
On the fools that they found in the lands of the Spirk.—
And each little grain of their powders of pain
They scraped up and pestled again and again—
Mixed in quadruple doses for gluttons and sots,
Till they strangled their dreams with gung-jibbrious knots!

[*The comet again trails past, upon which the* Nightmares *leap and disappear.* JUCKLET *staggers to his feet and glares frenziedly around—then starts for opposite exit of comet—is there suddenly confronted with fiend-faces in the air, bewhiskered with ragged purplish flames that flare audibly and huskily in abrupt alternating chill gasps and hot welterings of wind. He starts back from them, reels and falls prostrate, groveling terrifiedly in the dust, and chattering, with eerie music accompanying his broken utterance.*]

JUCKLET

Æo! Æo! Æo!
Thou that dost all things know—
    Waiving all claims of mine to *dare* to pray,
Save that I needs *must*:—Lo,
    What *may* I pray for? Yea,
    I have not *any* way,
An *Thou* gainsayest me a tolerance so.—
    I dare not pray
        Forgiveness—too great
        My vast o'ertoppling weight
    Of sinning; nor can I
    Pray my
Poor soul unscourged to go.—
Frame *Thou* my prayer, Æo!

What may I pray for? Dare
I shape a prayer,
        In sooth,
    For any cancelled joy
        Of my mad youth,
    Or any bliss my sin's stress did destroy?

What may I pray for—What?—
That the wild clusters of forget-me-not
And mignonette
And violet
Be out of childhood brought,
And in mine hard heart set
A-blooming now as then?—
With all their petals yet
Bediamonded with dews—
Their sweet, sweet scent let loose
Full sumptuously again!

What *may* I pray, Æo!
For the poor hutchèd cot
Where death sate squat
Midst my first memories?—Lo!
My mother's face—(they, whispering, told me so)—
That face!—so pinchedly
It blanched up, as they lifted me—
Its frozen eyelids would
Not part, nor could
Be ever wetted open with warm tears.
. . . Who hears
The prayers for all dead-mother-sakes, Æo!

Leastwise *one* mercy:—May
I not have leave to pray
All *self* to pass away—
Forgetful of all needs mine own—
Neglectful of all creeds;—alone,

Stand fronting Thy high throne and say:
To Thee,
O Infinite, I pray
Shield *Thou* mine enemy!

[*Music throughout supplication gradually softens and sweetens into utter gentleness, with scene slow-fading into densest night.*]

End Act II

ACT III

Scene I. *Court of* Krung—*Royal* Ministers, Counsellors, *etc., in session.* Crestillomeem, *in full blazonry of regal attire, presiding. She signals a* Herald *at her left, who steps forward.—Blare of trumpets, greeted with ominous murmurings within, blent with tumult from without.*

Herald

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,
The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,
Crestillomeem, to her most loyal, leal
And right devoted subjects, greeting sends—
Proclaiming, in the absence of the King,
Her royal presence—

[*Voice of* Herald *fails abruptly—utterly.—A breathless hush falls sudden on the court.—A sense oppressive—ominous—affects the throng. Weird music heard of unseen instruments.*]

HERALD [*Huskily striving to be heard*]

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,
The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,
Crestillomeem—

[*The* Queen *gasps, and clutches at* Herald, *mutely signing him to silence, her staring eyes fixed on a shadowy figure, mistily developing before her into wraith-like form and likeness of the Tune-Fool,* SPRAIVOLL. *The shape—evidently invisible and voiceless to all senses but the* Queen's—*wavers vaporishly to and fro before her, moaning and crooning in infinitely sweet-sad minor cadences a mystic song.*]

WRAITH-SONG OF SPRAIVOLL

I will not hear the dying word
Of any friend, nor stroke the wing
Of any little wounded bird.
. . . Love is the deadest thing!

I wist not if I see the smile
Of prince or wight, in court or lane.—
I only know that afterwhile
He will not smile again.

The summer blossom, at my feet,
Swims backward, drowning in the grass.—
I will not stay to name it sweet—
Sink out! and let me pass!

I have no mind to feel the touch
Of gentle hands on brow and hair.—
The lack of this once pained me much,
And so I have a care.

Dead weeds, and husky-rustling leaves
That beat the dead boughs where ye cling,
And old dead nests beneath the eaves—
Love is the deadest thing!

Ah! once I fared not all alone;
And once—no matter, rain or snow!—
The stars of summer ever shone—
Because I loved him so!

With always tremblings in his hands,
And always blushes unaware,
And always ripples down the strands
Of his long yellow hair.

I needs must weep a little space,
Remembering his laughing eyes
And curving lip, and lifted face
Of rapture and surprise.

O joy is dead in every part,
And life and hope; and so I sing:
In all the graveyard of my heart
Love is the deadest thing!

[*With dying away of song, apparition of* SPRAIVOLL *slowly vanishes.* CRESTILLOMEEM *turns dazedly to throng, and with labored effort strives to reassume imperious mien.—Signs for merl and tremulously drains goblet*

—sinks back in throne with feigned complacency, mutely waving Herald *to proceed.*]

HERALD [*Mechanically*]

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—Her Majesty,
The All-Glorious and Ever-Gracious Queen,
Crestillomeem, to her most loyal, leal
And right devoted subjects, greeting sends—
Proclaiming, in the absence of the King,
Her royal presence, as by him empowered
To sit and occupy, maintain and hold,
And therefrom rule the Throne, in sovereign state,
And work the royal will—[*Confusion.*] Hist, ho! Ay, ay!
Ay, ay!—And be it known, the King, in view
Of his approaching dissolution—

[*Sensation among* Counsellors, *etc., within, and wild tumult without and cries "Long live the* King!" *and "Treason!" "Intrigue!" "Sorcery!"* CRESTILLOMEEM, *in suppressed ire, waving silence, and* Herald *striving to be heard.*]

HERALD

Hist, ho! Ay, ay! Ay, ay!—The King, in view
Of his approaching dissolution, hath
Decreed this instrument—this royal scroll
[*Unrolling and displaying scroll.*]
With royal seal thereunto set by Krung's
Most sacred act and sign—

[*General sensation within, and growing tumult without, with wrangling cries of "Plot!" "Treason!" "Con-*

spiracy!" and "Down with the Queen!" *"Down with the usurper!" "Down with the Sorceress!"*]

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Wildly*]

Who dares to cry
"Conspiracy!" Bring me the traitor-knave!

[*Growing confusion without—sound of rioting.—Voice, "Let me be taken! Let me be taken!" Enter* Guards, *dragging* JUCKLET *forward, wild-eyed and hysterical—the* Queen's *gaze fastened on him wonderingly.*]

CRESTILLOMEEM [*To* Guards]

Why bring ye Jucklet hither in this wise?

GUARD

O Queen, 'tis he who cries "Conspiracy!"
And who incites the mob without with cries
Of "Plot!" and "Treason!"

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Starting*]

Ha! Can this be true?
I'll not believe it!—Jucklet is my fool,
But not so vast a fool that he would tempt
His gracious Sovereign's ire. [*To* Guards.] Let him be freed!

[*Then to* JUCKLET, *with mock service.*]

Stand hither, O my Fool!

JUCKLET [*To* Queen]

What! I, thy fool?
Ho! ho! *Thy* fool?—ho! ho!—Why, *thou* art *mine!*

[*Confusion—cries of "Strike down the traitor!"* JUCKLET *wrenching himself from grasp of officers.*]

Back, all of ye! I have not waded hell
That I should fear your puny enmity!
Here will I give ye proof of all I say!

[*Presses toward throne, wedging his opposers left and right—*CRESTILLOMEEM *sits as though stricken speechless—pallid, waving him back—*JUCKLET, *fairly fronting her, with folded arms—then to throng continues.*]

Lo! do I here defy her to lift up
Her voice and say that Jucklet speaks a lie.

[*At sign of* Queen, *officers, unperceived by* JUCKLET, *close warily behind him.*]

And, further—I pronounce the document
That craven Herald there holds in his hand
A forgery—a trick—and dare the Queen,
Here in my listening presence, to command
Its further utterance!

CRESTILLOMEEM [*Wildly rising*]

Hold, hireling!—Fool!—
The Queen thou dost in thy mad boasts insult
Shall utter first thy doom!

[JUCKLET, *seized from behind by* Guards, *is hurled face upward on the dais at her feet, while a minion, with drawn sword pressed close against his breast, stands over him.*]

—Ere we proceed
With graver matters, let this demon-knave
Be sent back home to hell.

[*With awful stress of ire, form quivering, eyes glittering and features twitched and ashen.*]

Give *me* the sword,—
The insult hath been mine—so even shall
The vengeance be!

[*As* CRESTILLOMEEM *seizes sword and bends forward to strike,* JUCKLET, *with superhuman effort, frees his hand, and, with a sudden motion and an incoherent muttering, flings object in his assailant's face.*—CRESTILLOMEEM *staggers backward, dropping sword, and, with arms tossed aloft, shrieks, totters and falls prone upon the pave. In confusion following* JUCKLET *mysteriously vanishes; and as the bewildered* Courtiers *lift the fallen* Queen, *a clear, piercing voice of thrilling sweetness is heard singing.*]

VOICE

The pride of noon must wither soon—
The dusk of death must fall;
Yet out of darkest night the moon
Shall blossom over all!

[*For an instant a dense cloud envelops empty throne—then gradually lifts, discovering therein* KRUNG *seated, in royal panoply and state, with* JUCKLET *in act of presenting scepter to him.—Blare of trumpets, and chorus of* Courtiers, Ministers, Heralds, *etc.*]

CHORUS

All hail! Long live the king!

KRUNG [*To throng, with grave salutation*]

Through Æo's own great providence, and through
The intervention of an angel whom
I long had deemed forever lost to me,
Once more your favored Sovereign, do I greet
And tender ye my blessing, O most good
And faith-abiding subjects of my realm!
In common, too, with your long-suffering King,
Have *ye* long suffered, blamelessly as he:
Now, therefore, know ye all what, until late,
He knew not of himself, and with him share
The rapturous assurance that is his,—
That, for all time to come, are we restored
To the old glory and most regal pride
And opulence and splendor of our realm.

[*Turning with pained features to the strangely stricken* Queen.]

There have been, as ye needs must know, strange spells
And wicked sorceries at work within
The very dais-boundaries of the Throne.

Lo! then, behold your harrier and mine,
And with me grieve for the self-ruined Queen
Who grovels at my feet, blind, speechless, and
So stricken with a curse herself designed
Should light upon Hope's fairest minister.

[*Motions attendants, who lead away* CRESTILLOMEEM—*the* King *gazing after her, overmastered with stress of his emotions.—He leans heavily on throne, as though oblivious to all surroundings, and, shaping into speech his varying thought, as in a trance, speaks as though witless of both utterance and auditor.*]

I loved her.—Why? I never knew.—Perhaps
Because her face was fair; perhaps because
Her eyes were blue and wore a weary air;—
Perhaps . . . perhaps because her limpid face
Was eddied with a restless tide, wherein
The dimples found no place to anchor and
Abide: perhaps because her tresses beat
A froth of gold about her throat, and poured
In splendor to the feet that ever seemed
Afloat. Perhaps because of that wild way
Her sudden laughter overleapt propriety;
Or—who will say?—perhaps the way she wept.
Ho! have ye seen the swollen heart of summer
Tempest, o'er the plain, with throbs of thunder
Burst apart and drench the earth with rain? She
Wept like that.—And to recall, with one wild glance
Of memory, our last love-parting—tears
And all. . . . It thrills and maddens me! And yet
My dreams will hold her, flushed from lifted brow

To finger-tips, with passion's ripest kisses
Crushed and mangled on her lips. . . . O woman!
while
Your face was fair, and heart was pure, and lips
Were true, and hope as golden as your hair,
I should have strangled you!

[*As* KRUNG, *ceasing to speak, piteously lifts his face,* SPRAIVOLL *all suddenly appears, in space left vacant by the* Queen, *and, kneeling, kisses the* King's *hand. —He bends in tenderness, kissing her brow—then lifts and seats her at his side. Speaks then to throng.*]

Good Subjects—Lords:
Behold in this sweet woman here my child
Whom, years agone, the cold, despicable
Crestillomeem—by baleful, wicked arts
And grewsome spells and fearsome witcheries—
Did spirit off to some strange otherland,
Where, happily, a Wunkland Princess found
Her, and undid the spell by sorcery
More potent—ay, *Divine,* since it works naught
But *good*—the gift of Æo, to right wrong.
This magic dower the Wunkland Princess hath
Enlisted in our restoration here,
In secret service, till this joyful hour
Of our complete deliverance. Even thus.—
Lo, let the peerless Princess now appear!

[*He lifts scepter, and a gust of melody, divinely beautiful, sweeps through the court.—The star above the*

throne loosens and drops slowly downward, bursting like a bubble on the scepter-tip, and, issuing therefrom, AMPHINE *and* DWAINIE, *hand in hand, kneel at the feet of* KRUNG, *who bends above them with his blessing, while* JUCKLET *capers wildly round the group.*]

JUCKLET

Ho! ho! but I could shriek for very joy!
And though my recent rival, fair Amphine,
Doth even now bend o'er a blossom, I,
Besprit me! have no lingering desire
To meddle with it, though with but one eye
I slept the while she backward walked around
Me in the garden.

[AMPHINE *dubiously smiles*—JUCKLET *blinks and leers*—*and* DWAINIE *bites her finger.*]

KRUNG

Peace! good Jucklet! Peace!
For this is not a time for any jest.—
Though the old order of our realm hath been
Restored, and though restored my very life—
Though I have found a daughter,—I have lost
A son—for Dwainie, with her sorcery,
Will, on the morrow, carry him away.
'Tis Æo's largess, as our love is His,
And our abiding trust and gratefulness.

CURTAIN

411

Close the Book

CLOSE the book, and leave the tale
All unfinished. It is best:
Brighter fancy will not fail
To relate the rest.

We have read it on and on,
Till each character, in sooth,
By the master-touches drawn,
Is a living truth.

Leave it so, and let us sit,
With the volume laid away—
Cut no other leaf of it,
But as Fancy may.—

Then the friends that we have met
In its pages will endure,
And the villain, even yet,
May be white and pure.

Close the book, and leave the tale
All unfinished. It is best:
Brighter fancy will not fail
To relate the rest.

(Close the Book.

CLOSE the book, and leave the tale
All unspeakable. It is base:
Brighter days will not fail
To relate the race.

We have read it, and [illegible]
And each character in each
[illegible] poem's theme;
Is a living truth.

Leave it so, and [illegible] it,
With the volume laid away
[illegible] other leaf of it.
[illegible]

[illegible]
To [illegible] will [illegible]
And [illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible] the book, and leave the tale
All unspeakable. It is base:
Brighter days will not fail
To relate the race.

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